THE NAGA STORY

First Armed Struggle in India

HARISH CHANDOLA

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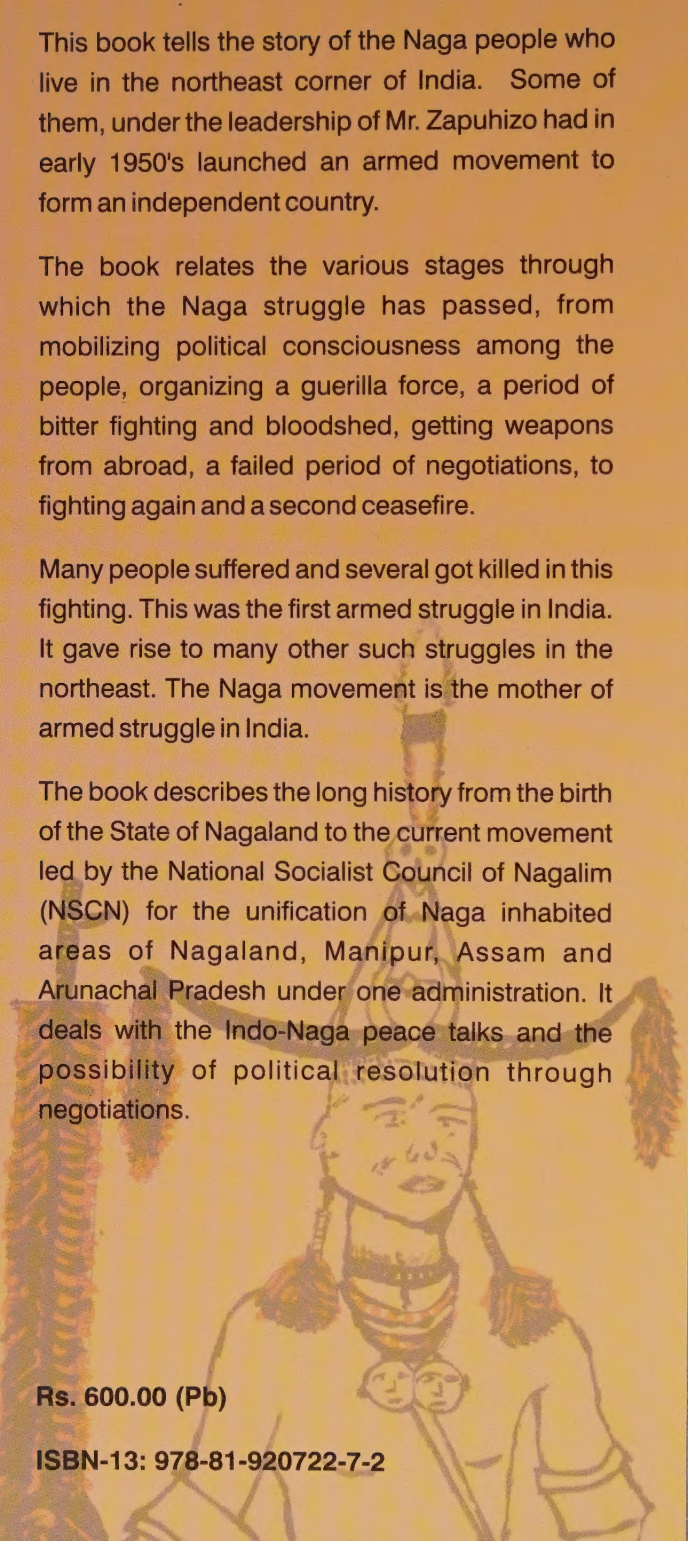
This book tells the story of the Naga people who live in the northeast corner of India. Some of them, under the leadership of Mr. Zapuhizo had in early 1950's launched an armed movement to form an independent country.

The book relates the various stages through which the Naga struggle has passed, from mobilizing political consciousness among the people, organizing a guerilla force, a period of bitter fighting and bloodshed, getting weapons from abroad, a failed period of negotiations, to fighting again and a second ceasefire.

Many people suffered and several got killed in this fighting. This was the first armed struggle in India. It gave rise to many other such struggles in the northeast. The Naga movement is the mother of armed struggle in India.

The book describes the long history from the birth of the State of Nagaland to the current movement led by the National Socialist Council of Nagalim (NSCN) for the unification of Naga inhabited areas of Nagaland, Manipur, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh under one administration. It deals with the Indo-Naga peace talks and the possibility of political resolution through negotiations.



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Arunachal Pradesh
NEPAL
Sikkim
BHUTAN
West Bengal
Assam
Nagaland
MYANMAR
Meghalaya
Manipur
Tripura
Mizoram
BANGLADESH

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HARISH CHANDOLA

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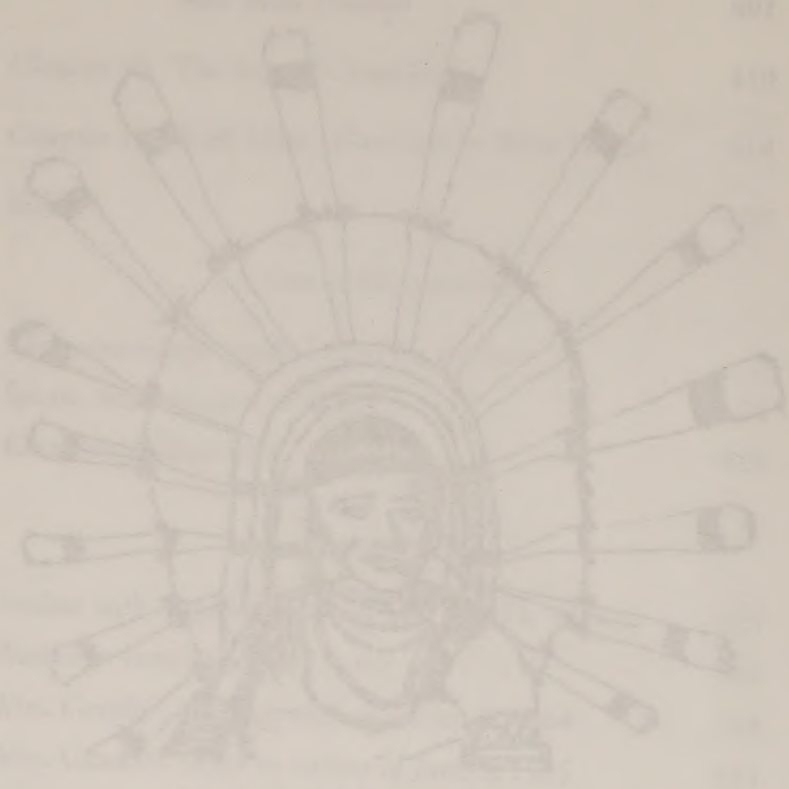
Khonoma village youth decked for festival



Introduction

India is inhabited by a large number of ethnic minorities, or tribes as they are called, about whom the country knows little. Where have these people come from, at what period of time?

The Naga tribes live in Nagaland state and also in Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, extending up to northwest Burma (Myanmar). It is believed that they came from southeast Asia, some say from southeast China, over a thousand years ago, and established their villages in eastern Himalayas where these mountains take a southern turn. Their villages have throughout been self-governed, which gives them their special character. At the time of Indian independence in 1947, some of these tribes declared themselves independent.

In the second half of the 19th century many of them had been conquered by the British who transferred their territory to India with the rest of the country at the time of independence.

How did the British Empire enter these hills, how many wars it fought to conquer and subjugate some of these tribes and how some of them decided to remain independent and not be a part of India, is the story this book tells. Their fight has not quite ended. There is a ceasefire in these hills between the Indian forces and fighters of the National Socialist Council of Nagalim (NSCN), a large Naga organization, to allow them to negotiate a settlement.

This book provides a little bit of history and the story of the struggle of the tribes against the British and subsequently with India.

This was the land where the Second World War was fought fiercely and came to an end in 1944, leaving quantities of weapons behind. It is also an area where one of the longest guerrilla wars was fought following Indian independence. The region has a second ceasefire now, from 1997. The first was from 1964 to 1968, when the first round of negotiations with Indian Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, were held. Peace has been maintained since 1997, in the hope of finding an agreement or solution between the two sides engaged in the talks.

Who are these people whom India calls its own and how has the Indian administration treated them, is described in this book.

The struggle of the Naga people has been political right from the beginning. The argument of the tribes was that they had always governed themselves without the control of any outside power and should be left to continue that system.

Before the British arrival in 1832, the King of the next-door Manipur Kingdom had tried to encroach on their land. Manipur had not made much headway in doing that, except robbing some villages. After Indian independence, the Naga tribes have been demanding that they be left to themselves to manage their affairs.

India after obtaining control of the region from the British, has been administering and developing it, like it has been the rest of the country, building roads, schools, hospitals and providing all sorts of facilities. Initially roads had been built to make Indian army movement easier, but now a network of them

has come up, making travel for everybody, especially the local Naga people, easy. Naga villages now have safe drinking water, electricity, cheap food grain shops, tin roofs and reasonably good houses. In fact the people have begun demanding more of these from the administration.

A special feature of this region is that its villages where 90 per cent Naga people live, are self-sufficient in food. They grow what they need. The towns which have come up of late are however dependent on foodgrain from outside.

A good deal of funds have been received by this region from Delhi for rapid development of infrastructure, which have created a class of rich traders, contractors, leaders and officials. These newly rich have bought village lands to establish farms and built palatial houses to assume the position of overlords. One of them is a former Chief Minister of Nagaland, Mr. S.C. Jamir.

The present round of negotiations has been going on for 14 years now. Very little progress has been made in them. But the hope of finding a satisfactory solution remains alive.

The main issues are however unresolved, like the unification of all Naga areas, the boundary and shape of the Naga state and its relations with the Union of India.

There are now many parties and views in Nagalim. It will be difficult to satisfy them all. The National Socialist Council of Nagalim (NSCN) is the largest party in the region and has the strength to implement an agreement it may reach with the Government of India. Most tribes have their own areas and leaders but organizationally the NSCN has the strength to get almost all Naga people to accept an agreement it may arrive at with Delhi. It does have the number of workers and political support to bring around others to its point of view.

A settlement with the Nagas will set an example for tribal and other people in the Northeast for finding a solution of their problems with the Government of India. In this troubled Northeast, there is hardly a region which did not have links with the Nagas, who have helped them with arms and training in pursuing their fights. The Naga struggle has been the oldest. Other struggles in Assam and North Bengal that came up subsequently maintained contacts with it. It were the Nagas who first of all started obtaining weapons from what was then called East Pakistan and established camps there. It is true that all struggling organizations in the Northeast have their own thinking, but they all were to a degree influenced by the Nagas.

Developments in Naga areas continue to exercise influence. India committed many mistakes in its Nagaland policy, as a result of which the Naga movement became more violent. A proper analysis of the Naga problem was lacking in Delhi and the Indian Government adopted steps recommended by its administrators without much consultation with Naga leaders. One easy way adopted was to find Nagas who supported Delhi policies and to impose them in the region.

Another way was to use Nagas to voice the opinion of the administration as their own and take decisions on that basis. Genuine Naga opinion was prevented from reaching leaders like Mr. Nehru and others in Delhi. As a result very shallow decisions were taken, which did not turn out to be long lasting. The officialdom sitting in distant Delhi used Nagas to voice what Delhi wanted. Money played a part in implementing decisions. Bureaucracy played a very important role in the formation of policy.

One drawback of the book is repetition. This happened because similar situations arose at different times and in different contexts and therefore one had to repeat what one had written earlier. I apologize for that profoundly and plead with readers to please keep reading because the repetitions too tell a story.

There is some confusion over the spelling of some Naga and other names in the book. I have spelt them in the manner these have appeared in papers and documents.

Spears, main weapon of Nagas

Chapter 1

Spring Thunder

March 30, 1953 was a bright, sunny, spring day. Travelling on foot from distant villages, Nagas of the Angami, Chakesang, Mao, Lotha, Ao and other tribes, in their colourful hand-woven shawls, different headgear, large and heavy ivory bracelets on arms, red and black rings of fine cane on their ankles, stood in orderly rows on both sides of the road coming from Imphal, the capital of Manipur, to Kohima—to welcome Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru.

Nehru was coming to Kohima the first time, accompanied by his friend, U Nu, the Prime Minister of Burma. He had come from Delhi to return to Burma the Kabaw Valley, annexed by Manipur many years ago. The two Prime Ministers had gathered in Manipur for the ceremony of returning the valley.

Before their arrival, the Deputy Commissioner of Kohima, Satyen Barkatoki, came up with men of mounted police. Intelligence men had told him that the Nagas lining the road may try to present a memorandum to Nehru, to say they had always lived their own kind of life, which they should be allowed to continue, free of Indian rule. Barkatoki felt that a memorandum of this kind would be an insult to Nehru and decided that a chance to present it should not to be given to

Nagas. He ordered the mounted police to drive the Nagas away, with their whips.

The Nagas could not understand why they were being beaten and driven away. Didn't they have the right to stand on their own land? Did Nehru not want the welcome they were giving him?

The news of the police assault on Nagas standing on the road spread like wild fire through Kohima. Among those come to welcome him were members of the only Naga organization, the Naga National Council (NNC). Their able leader and General Secretary, Theo Sakhrei, after consultation with his colleagues decided that the people need not bother to wait to hear Nehru, after the police's barbaric behaviour.

The Kohima football field was crowded with waiting Nagas. Sakhrei spoke to them and said: "It seems the authorities do not want us to hear Nehru. Our people standing on the road to welcome him have been whipped and driven away. You too should go home!"

As soon as the Nehru-U Nu entourage reached Kohima and the Prime Ministers, in high spirits, began ascending the steps to the platform, they saw people getting up and leaving. The Prime Ministers did not know why. Why were they going away after waiting? Nehru seized the microphone and started reasoning with them: "Please sit down! I have to speak to you! Sit down!"

But the football field became empty. A few government interpreters remained, clad in their red blankets. For the first time in his life Nehru faced such a situation. He had never felt so humiliated, and that too in the presence of his old friend and neighbour, U-Nu!

Later, the affronted administration mustered a gathering of its Naga employees, interpreters, village chiefs and others, and had Nehru address them. That small crowd looked like mourners.

The whiplashes of the mounted police had broken the link of fellow feeling between the Naga and Indian people. The Nagas found what their leaders, like Zapuphizo, had been saying all along, that Indians were bereft of kindness and only sought to rule them was true.

Nehru and U Nu drove back to Manipur.

A number of persons had come with Nehru, including some journalists. But the news of thousands of Nagas boycotting his meeting was suppressed.

On June 11, 1956, fighting broke out between Naga fighters in Kohima village and the Assam Rifles camp below. I then wrote a long article on the Naga problem on the edit page of the Sunday *The Times of India* and dwelt on the incident of people leaving Mr. Nehru's meeting. It caused a storm in government circles. Frank Moraes, the editor of the *The Times of India* then worked from Bombay. A high official of the External Affairs Ministry telephoned him to publish a contradiction of my story of the boycott in Kohima! Moraes said he on his own would not do that, but if the government sent a statement contradicting the story, he would publish it. Then, Mr. Trilokinath Kaul, a Joint Secretary of the External Affairs Ministry, asked me to write a disclaimer to say that whatever I wrote of the meeting, on the basis of what I was told, was incorrect.

I did not do that.

When the Indian army was sent to the Naga Hills in 1950s and began making arrests and burning villages, questions

were raised in the Parliament in Delhi. Nehru, thereupon, on August 23, 1956, gave a long account of his journey to Kohima three years ago and of fighting in Naga areas. About the boycott of Nagas of his meeting in Kohima, he said, "I had told the administration there to assemble people to welcome the prime minister of Burma, so that he could say a few words to them. Later, I came to know that the Nagas wanted to give me a memorandum. The Deputy Commissioner of Kohima said to them, 'I will not allow a memorandum to be submitted or read.' Then, when U Nu and I reached the venue, Nagas started going away. I was very pained. Not for myself, but that was an insult to our guest."

The Assam administration, of which Naga Hills were a part, came down on the Nagas heavily for their boycott of Nehru's meeting. Barkatoki decided to teach the Nagas a lesson they wouldn't forget in a hurry. He sent out police to raid and ransack Naga villages to capture Sakhrei and his mates who had boycotted Nehru's meeting. Arrests were made. Some government employees were also locked up. In the tiny Kohima town several arrest warrants were issued. Following arrests, members of the sole Naga organization, the Naga National Council, began going underground. In Viswema, Jakhama, Kigwema and Feysama villages, the police carried out raids, confiscated licensed guns and made many arrests.

On Nehru's return to Imphal, the police entered villages and began beating people. They wanted to teach the villagers a lesson. How dare they disregard Nehru's plea to remain seated? How dare they walk out?

Some got killed. The bodies of a villager, Beechatami of Meema, near Kohima, and of Lopeelu Tami, were tied with

ropes by the police and dragged through streets, to put fear in the minds of onlookers.

Not fear, but rage rose in people's minds. They wondered, what kind of people are these new rulers, who humiliate even the dead?

On March 4, 1954, in a land dispute the Assam Armed Police shot dead the wife of a village elder, besides threatening others. On enquiry the administration admitted that the firing took place without reason. In May an attack was carried out on Khonoma village, and houses searched. Police were called from Assam and nine new police posts were set up. Naga leaders said, "See the difference between the British and Indian administration! Living in India will mean all this!"

Some Nagas went to forests to hide and became militants. They began putting pressure on Nagas employed by the government to resign. From villagers they asked for their guns and stole some from police posts. They closed down government high schools and set up their own Naga National high schools in Kohima and Mokokchung.

Village elders were declared government agents and were told to stop collecting house tax (a two-rupee yearly levy) and return their red blankets which showed them as government servants. The government declared those hiding in forests as hostiles and began meting out punishments to their families. Elders were harassed by both sides and some resigned their jobs.

The young began facing problems. Some were taken away by agents of the "hostiles" or Underground and were enrolled in their armed organization of homeguards. Others were taught the use of guns. Villagers were beaten up by the police and taken away for forced, unpaid labour.

In September 1953 the Assam government passed a law imposing forced labour in view of the emergency in the Hills. Villagers were put to work on road-building and clearing jungles. To escape this imposition, many joined the underground and hid in forests. To put down the extremists, India sent more force.

Indian armed forces were unfamiliar with the people and the terrain there. They let loose a reign of terror, burnt villages, the numbers of which, according to Nagas, ran into hundreds. The figures of those killed are not available even today, half a century later. Young boys from villages were taken away by the army, whose whereabouts are still not known.

The situation turned so fearful that close associates of their leader, Zapuphizo, began feeling that hiding in jungles was no guarantee of life or safety for him. A large sum had been announced by the Indian government as prize money for his capture. Faced with such a situation, his fellow villagers took him to the nearby Naga area of Tamenglong, in Manipur. From there, trekking through northern Cachar of Assam, they took him to East Pakistan, which fourteen years later became Bangladesh. Zapuphizo stayed in its capital, Dhaka, for some years. It was from there that Naga militants began bringing small arms, explosives and funds. Pakistan considered it useful to offer this aid. It cost little, tied down a part of the Indian forces in Nagaland and drained Indian resources. But this help was not openly given. When asked, Pakistan denied it.

Indian authorities meanwhile said Zapuphizo was dead. When the police were ransacking villages and houses in Naga Hills, searching for him, he was sitting pretty in East Pakistan, where he was kept in hiding. There was no dearth of Indian

spies in Dacca, the capital of East Pakistan. In front of and behind the house where he was kept, trunks of giant trees were stacked. When people asked who and from where was the person living in the house was, they were told that he was a forest contractor from Northern Chittagong. The natives of Northern Chittagong resembled Nagas in face and features.

There was a total boycott by Nagas of the first Indian general election in 1952, after it was declared a republic. Not a single Naga stood as a candidate. To teach them a lesson for this show of solidarity, the Assam government declared their organization, the Naga National Council, illegal. In protest a big procession was taken out in Kohima. Right in the middle of the procession, mounted on his motorbike, drove Captain Virk of the Assam Rifles. To keep the road clear, he fired his gun. A bullet hit Jasibito Angami, a judge of the government's the Naga Tribal Court, who was not in any way connected with the procession. He died.

Naga society began wondering how to ensure its safety. It considered its options. Court arrest? Go underground? More young men began going underground. Naga nationalism rose from this saga of repression and strengthened the stirrings of Naga independence. Now the people fully understood the meaning of their leaders' contention that living in India would mean ceaseless exposure to violence.

Then, on September 18, 1954, headed by Honking, the Naga National Council declared the setting up of an Underground Naga government.

The same year a postal worker was killed in Tuensang Division of the North East Frontier Agency, north of Naga Hills of Assam. The postal worker belonged to Pangsha village

and the killer was from Impang village nearby. Just then, the Indian Intelligence Bureau came to know that some workers and members of the Naga National Council were encamped in Impang village. The Bureau incited the villagers of Pangsha to attack Impang, to avenge the death of their man. Pangsha responded and killed 57 people in Impang. Among those killed were three members of the Naga National Council. One was a frontline leader of the Naga Youth Council, Temjen Taaka Ao. More incidents of violence followed. Unrest spread in Tuensang Division. Indian administration was new and not so strong there. To keep itself organized, under the leadership of Zapuphizo, the Naga National Council became active in this area.

When things take a turn for the worse, government invariably thinks that they can gain the upper hand by the use of force. In Tuensang this was the line of action adopted. On August 27, 1955, Indian forces were sent there. Members of the Naga National Council were to be chased, caught and their rebellion quelled.

In the neighbouring Naga Hills District of Assam the situation took a turn for the worse. This was the birthplace of the Naga movement. The Nagas courted arrest en masse and the arrested were subjected to fearful ordeals.

To strengthen itself, the Naga National Council dismissed the Hoking government, set up an Underground Federal Government of Nagaland, and, under the leadership of Thongdi Chang set up the Naga Home Guards Organisation for fighting.

During the Second World War of 1943-44, Japanese and British forces had left behind quantities of weapons in this area.

Naga Home Guards collected these and obtained their muscle power with them.

More Indian armymen were then called in to clear the encampments of Naga militants. Naga fighters fought back and the fighting spread. In hot pursuit of the hit and run tactics of the Nagas, the Indian army entered villages and burnt some. Villagers ran away to forests where some died of starvation and disease. Indian forces could not enter the thick forests, nor could they easily chase the Naga militants in an area of very heavy rain. Their operations failed to gain ground.

This area had been partly taken over by the Japanese in the spring of 1944. For various reasons Japanese forces could not enter India, which was their objective, from this area. They began retreating. (The story of this will be told in a subsequent chapter.) From here began the decline of the World War II. The Japanese forces had arms. But after coming some 7,000 kilometers from home, their food supplies had finished. Their soldiers began dying of hunger. Their tired troops could not walk back with the weight of weapons on their back. They abandoned them on the way.

The retreating Japanese soldiers went back to Burma. At Tamu town they saw a Buddhist pagoda. There many committed hara-kiri, or ritual suicide. Soldiers of the land of the Rising Sun could not think of returning home in defeat.

Around Naga villages lay abandoned arms of all kinds, left by Japanese and also British troops. Handgrenades, mortars, cannons, bombs, light and heavy machine guns, bandoliers of bullets and rifles of Japanese and British make. On the eastern slope of the bungalow of the Deputy Commissioner of Kohima, a tank was left behind. It remained there until a couple of years ago.

Such quantity of abandoned armament was seen next only in Afghanistan, after half a century, in the 1990s.

From the beginning of their history, Nagas had defended their villages. They gathered the abandoned weapons and hid them in jungles and homes. Many were new. No Naga knew how to fire a mortar gun. On the edge of the road going to Manipur, villagers of Viswema tried to learn how to do that. The first experiment killed eight villagers. But after that the youngmen became experts in firing mortars.

The Naga National Council had become a political organization from its social beginning. Its leadership came to Zapuphizo. During the Second World War Zapuphizo had gone to Rangoon in Burma to work. He was sent back to India and kept in a Calcutta jail for sometime.

During the war, aided by Japanese, Indian soldiers of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose's Indian National Army had come to Burma with the Japanese, on their way to India. In Rangoon Zapuphizo took part in negotiations with the Japanese for the independence of Nagas and is said to have joined Netaji Bose's forces. How Zapuphizo came to Burma is a story in itself.

After a few days in jail in Calcutta, Zapuphizo was released and returned to Kohima, where he raised the issue of Naga independence. After the British left India, India's Assam government let loose a policy of repression in the Naga territory to put an end to the talk of Naga independence. That repression made Zapuphizo's ask: if the Nagas and Indians are equal citizens of the same country, why does the Indian government discriminate against the Nagas and is indifferent to their feelings?

In reaction to the Indian oppression, Naga feeling became

explosive. Mr. Zapuphizo began asking his people to gather the abandoned arms and go to forests to hide and fight against the Indian (Assam) police oppression.

To prevent the possibility of fighting breaking out in Naga Hills, in February1956, three respected members of the Naga community came to Delhi. They were, Jashie Hurrey from Kohima, Magurto from Khonoma, and Vizol from Viswema. They came to Delhi to meet Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and other leaders to explain the situation to them and find ways of solving the Naga problem through negotiations. Jashie and Vizol had served in the air force during the Second World War. Magurto had then been in the army. Later, two of them worked as school teachers, and the third became a farmer.

Hearing of their departure for Delhi, the Chief Minister of Assam, Bishnuram Medhi, warned Nehru by telegram that he should not meet them for they were from the Naga Underground and by meeting and talking to them Mr. Nehru would only be encouraging rebellion.

Not one of the three had ever been Underground. Assam Chief Minister Medhi took recourse to this falsehood to scare Nehru. By using his office and position, Mr. Medhi frightened Mr. Nehru. Nehru had then come to rely heavily on the advice of Congress leaders and bureaucrats. Mr. Trilokinath Kaul, a Joint Secretary of the External Affairs Ministry, told Mr. Nehru, "Do not meet these Nagas. Let us, the officials, meet them first and hear what they want and we will then tell you the purpose of their coming here". Kaul could not explain, after meeting them, what they wanted to tell Mr. Nehru and Indian leaders, neither could he confirm that they were members of the Naga Underground.

The three stayed in the Central Court Hotel of New Delhi to meet the Prime Minister. They were told that the Prime Minister would not be able to see them but that they should see the Home Minister, Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant. The three went to Mr. Pant's official residence on Queen Victoria Road. Intelligence men had already advised Mr. Pant to threaten them and pay no attention to what they had to say.

The trio told to Mr. Pant that a very dangerous situation was building up in Naga Hills, to which Delhi was not paying attention. The Assam Government was hostile to Nagas. The Congress Party President, Mr. Dhebar, had visited Kohima recently on his way to Manipur. "We appealed to him to meet and talk to Naga leaders in Kohima on his way, and try to understand the situation there. The Indian government should not take decisions based on reports of intelligence agencies. But Dhebar refused our request. We have come to you in despair. Please control the situation there before it gets worse. To confer with you we are prepared to bring other Naga leaders also to Delhi."

By then Mr. Pant had mastered the art of using language of power and learnt to talk with condescension. "You needn't worry," he assured them. "We have enough security forces in Naga Hills. We will not allow any kind of violence there on any account. Please go back and have no fear," he told them.

Magurto of Khonoma village was not used to meaningless assurances. He said, "We have come to you from a far place. We know who in our place has how many weapons. We also know the provocations being made in our land. Sitting in far away Delhi, you cannot know what our people are thinking of doing."

Mr. Pant cut him short and said, "You needn't worry. We get all information from there. We have enough strength to prevent any disturbance in that area."

The three were unfamiliar with such meaningless assurances. Magurtho said, "You are sitting here, so far away, giving assurances and not listening to us! We have wasted our time in coming here! Thank you and Good bye!" He rose and stretched out his hand to shake Pantji's in parting.

People coming to meet Mr. Pant left only after seeking his permission. When this unknown Naga got up on their own to leave, Mr. Pant took it as an insult.

He did not take the extended hand of Magurtho but said angrily, "I will not shake hands with those who have the blood of Sakhrei on them."

Magurtho shot back. "You are accusing us of the murder of Sakhrei? You should know that he was my nephew! You were the cause of his murder!"

And the three left Mr. Pant's residence without shaking hands with him.

Sakhrei, who has been mentioned earlier in Mr. Nehru's visit to Kohima, was a leading thinker, writer and activist of the Naga National Council and its general secretary. His weakness however was drink. Knowing that, intelligence operatives of Assam exploited it and supplied him Indian liquor, many times more potent than the Naga brew, to find the hiding places of Zapuphizo, Imkongmeren and other Naga leaders, and the storage of their weapons.

Sakhrei had started saying that he wanted a peaceful solution of the Naga problem.

In a northern Angami village was the home of Sakhrei's beloved. She called Sakhrei to her home one day. That very night

some armed Nagas came and took him away. The next day his bullet riddled body was found tied to a tree in a forest nearby. People said Sakhrei was killed on orders from Zapuphizo, who wanted an armed struggle and not a peaceful settlement.

Inspite of Mr. Pant's assurances in Delhi, fighting broke out between militant Nagas and the Indian armed forces soon afterwards. It is now over forty years since Mr. Govind Ballabh Pant died, but the fighting has not fully stopped.

I was born more than 3,000 kilometers west of Kohima, in Dolinda village of Garhwal district. I had travelled in many areas of the northeast, including the Naga Hills. From 1957 to 1962, I was the northeast correspondent of the *The Times of India* in Shillong, the capital of Assam. There I had married a Naga girl. Afterwards I worked in West Asia and Africa until 1964.

Coming back to Delhi in 1964, I was one day called by the Prime Minister, Lal Bahadur Shastri, to see him. Gentle and polite, Shastriji said, "You must be knowing that cessation of hostilities in Nagaland is going to take place from September 6, 1964, as agreed between the Naga Underground and our government". (By then a new state with an English name, 'Nagaland', had come into being.) "A three members Peace Mission supported by both sides will initiate talks on solving the Naga problem peacefully. You know many Nagas. Go there and help us in the coming talks. Bimla Prasad Chaliha, the chief minister of Assam, is in the Naga Peace Mission. He is a very perceptive person, and is a friend of yours. He wants you there for the negotiations at the earliest."

To exert pressure on me to go to Kohima, Shastriji must have called me to his residence at least half a dozen times. His

main argument was that helping in peace-making was a national task, which I must not reject. "Don't worry at all about how you will survive there, after quitting your newspaper job. We shall take good care of you", he said time and again.

To discuss expenses, he arranged a meeting for me with Lakshmikant Jha, his powerful Secretary. Jha asked, "Tell me, what will be your expenses in Kohima?"

"I'll will know only after going there", I said foolishly.

"You'll rent accommodation there. What'll the rent be roughly?"

"My father-in-law has a house there. I'll stay in it in the beginning, and may not have to pay rent." I said.

"Some expenses will be incurred on your family's food, etc.?" he asked. Again, like a fool, I said, "I may not have to pay anything to my father-in-law initially!"

When I was unable to give him an idea of my expenses, Mr. Jha said with some annoyance, "All right. Go there and let us know what amount you will need."

Very soon, one day, Shastriji's Joint Secretary, Madangopal Kaul, brought over an air ticket for me to Jorhat from Delhi and five thousand rupees. "The PM has asked you to go to Jorhat at once, where Mr. Chaliha is waiting for you," he said.

My coming to Kohima made ministers in the new state of Nagaland uncomfortable. Why is this outsider being included in the peace process and negotiations, they began asking. That too a man who had opposed the formation of Nagaland State, and who, as the Shillong correspondent of his paper, had brazenly written that the Naga Underground should be brought into the negotiations. How can such a man be trusted? The Kohima bureaucracy then decided to make it clear that I had no place there.

As the Shillong correspondent of the *The Times of India* in 1959-60, I had written: "The Naga officials whom the government of India was transforming into political leaders and to whom it wanted to give the reins of its new Naga state government, will not be able to find a solution, for they have no dispute with the government. The government's dispute is with the Underground Nagas. By reaching an agreement with its own officials for setting up a state of Nagaland how can Delhi hope to solve the problem? Those with whom it really has differences will still be left in the jungle, fighting!"

Over this, officials who overnight had become leaders, were very unhappy with me. I had written that not one of them had any political sense and was capable of giving sane political advice.

As for Shilu Ao, who became Nagaland's first Chief Minister, my friend Haleem Khan and I, had once, in his pre-ministerial days, beaten him for misbehaving at a reception with the daughter of Mr. Kidwai, the Chief Secretary of Assam.

Resigning my newspaper job in Delhi in the beginning of September, I came to live in my father-in-law's house near the Mission Compound, below Kohima village. One day a red-coated, white-turbaned messenger from Rajbhavan or the Governor's House, came to say that Mr. Gundevia, the Foreign Secretary and chief of the Indian negotiating team with the Nagas, had called me over.

I had left in Delhi the car I had brought from Cairo. So I climbed three kilometers on foot to the Governor's House. In its outer room two middle-aged men were talking. I told them that I had been asked to come, when one of them got up, said he was Gundevia and took me to the small lawn outside to talk.

He asked me, without preliminaries: "What are you doing here?"

"Nothing", I said.

"Yesterday, when I was leaving Delhi to come here, Shastriji (the Prime Minister) told me about your being here, and said that we were to look after you. Why should we do that, if you are not doing anything?"

"You need not," I said. "I don't know what Shastriji told you. I don't even know that you were to look after me. If the Prime Minister told you to do something which you don't want to do, what can I say?"

Finding me bold and unafraid, he became a little reflective and said, "Shastriji told me that you would be assisting Chaliha (Chief Minister of Assam and the main person in Nagaland Peace Mission). I have been appointed leader of the Indian Delegation to talks here, and I want to tell you that whatever you do for Chaliha, you should do the same for me!"

I said, "Chalihaji is an old friend of mine. He asks me, if this or that proposal would he acceptable to Underground Nagas? Or, what would be their reaction to what we say?"

"You will do the same for me", Gundevia declared.

"Whenever you will want to know the reaction of Nagas to peace talks, I shall certainly tell you, on the basis of what I know," I said.

But he could see that I would not play a courtier to him.

Earlier, over dinner the previous night. Gundevia had met Shilu Ao, the Chief Minister, and other Ministers. They had asked Gundevia, "Why has Chandola come here? Who has sent him? What will he do here?"

Before sending Gundevia to Kohima from Delhi for talks, Shastriji had told him, "Meet Chandola in Kohima, ask him

about his expenses and give him whatever he needs." That was why Gundevia had called me to Rajbhavan and tried to turn me into a courtier by telling me that he would pay me my expenses.

To his sudden question I could only say that there was nothing I wanted from him.

Gundevia disregarded Shastriji's order. He did not ever again ask me about my expenses; nor gave me anything.

Let me now tell the story of Shilu Ao, who became the first Chief Minister of Nagaland. Between some Naga leaders and Delhi in 1960, a sixteen-point agreement was reached, to form a new state called Nagaland. The government had decided to appoint a Naga Chief Minister. The person chosen for this job was at that time working as a "nayab tehsildar" or Junior Revenue Official, in Nowgong district of Assam. He was Shilu Ao. It was decided to make him the Chief Minister of the new state, after the President of India inaugurated it in 1963.

In January 1961, Shilu was called to Shillong to meet the Governor, retired Army Chief, General Shrinagesh. He was put up at the best government hotel, Pinewood. In the hotel, that night a farewell dinner was being held for Mr. Maitrey, the director of the Assam Oil Company. Shillong at the time was the capital of the whole of North-Eastern India. All senior officers and their families were invited to the dinner. The Chief Secretary of Assam was Mr. Kidwai, of the Indian Civil Service. His daughter, Shahnaz, of great beauty, was there with her parents.

That evening Shilu Ao came to Pinewood Hotel after meeting the Governor. He was a known drunk and saw liquor flowering freely at the farewell party for Mr. Maitrey. Assam Oil was the richest company in the state.

Uninvited, Shilu joined the party and started drinking. His eyes fell on Shahnaz. Going to her he began harassing her. Guests asked, who he was? Somebody said he was the Nayab Tehsildar or Extra Assistant Commissioner of Nowgong, who was going to be made the Chief Executive Councillor of the new state of Nagaland and later its Chief Minister!

When the drunk Shilu began misbehaving, a very gentlemanly Mr. Kidwai came to me and said, "Try to free my daughter from this person. The man's bothering her too much!" A friend of mine, Haleem Khan, Manager of French Motorcar Company, was at the party. I sought his help, and both of us went to Shilu and said, "Shilu, this party is about to get over. Come with us to another, which will go on till morning. There will be oceans of liquor there."

Shilu was ready straightaway. I seated Haleem and him in the back of my car and started it. It was winter and outside the cold was biting. Streets were deserted. Shillong was then a small town. Twelve kilometers below, a river was being barraged to form a lake. Five minutes out of town Haleem said, "let's go and drown this fellow in the lake!" Shilu then knew that he was being taken to some dangerous place. "Where are you taking me?" he asked, frightened. Haleem then began beating him, raining blows left and right and telling him, "we'll show you what happens when you pester a girl at a party!" Shilu began whimpering: "You're my mother and father! Forgive me! I did wrong!" After he'd taken a good beating, he pleaded not to throw him in the lake. I stopped Haleem from beating him any more. Haleem said,"OK, we won't push him into the lake but we'll definitely leave him there. Let him spend the night walking 12 kilometers back to the hotel." When we got to the

lake I said "Let's drop him back at the hotel". Inspite Haleem's objections, I backed the car and drove up towards the hotel. There, after we'd let him out, he reared up and started abusing us. "Bastards! Wait and see what I do to you tomorrow!" Haleem got out of the car, kicked him all the way inside the hotel from the gate, and said, "Why tomorrow? Why not now?"

After Shilu became the Chief Minister, Haleem had his shoe with which he had kicked Shilu through the hotel gate, mounted in a frame and hung it on his drawing room wall as a trophy! He said no other shoe will ever have the honour of kicking a Chief Minister!

When I was sent by Mr. Shastri to Kohima in 1964, Shilu had become the Chief Minister of Nagaland, and the Home Minister was Jasokie, whom, in 1957, the Deputy Commissioner of Kohima, Ramunni, had brought over to meet me. Jasokie too was unhappy over my coming to Kohima, and expressed his displeasure to Mr. Gundevia. Ever since my coming to Kohima the whole cabinet and all senior officers spared no efforts to see me out of the place.

My in-laws lived 75 kilometres away, in Dimapur. In Kohima I paid for my travel to meet Naga leaders living in various places and for the expenses of my family. Within a year and a half my savings were finished. With no other means available, I withdrew my provident fund, with the declaration that I had been without means or income for over six months.

Living in Kohima was difficult for my family too. In Cairo, I was paid well by my newspaper, and like other foreigners, lived well. In Kohima we had scarcely enough.

For many reasons talks with the underground Nagas, first led by Mr. Gundevia and then by Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi herself, made no headway. On February 25, 1966,

Mr. Jaya Prakash Narayan, resigned from the three-member Nagaland Pace Mission. On May 3, 1966, the second member of the Mission, Reverend Michael Scott, was deported and sent back to England. The same day, Mr. Bimla Prasad Chaliha also resigned and announced that the Peace Mission had been disbanded.

The Nagas at that time were planting bombs in trains and killing people.

In 1967 elections, the Congress Party lost its big majority in Indian Parliament. Of its 520 seats, only 278 went to the Congress. The Swatantra Party won 44, the Jana Sangh 35. Indira Gandhi however stayed on as Prime Minister with the support of the two Communist Parties, with 22 and 19 members in Parliament, respectively, 14 members of the Andhra Praja Samiti, a few Independents, and some others.

In America the term of our Ambassador, Brajkumar Nehru, was over. He was a relative of Indira Gandhi, and was called Bijju Bhai by her. Bijju Bhai thought he was of royal descent. He belonged to the Indian Civil Service of the British, and a few years before being sent as ambassador to U.S.A. had retired from it. Back from America, he aspired for a lower house seat in Parliament and a Ministership. (See his Autobiography, '*Nice Guys Finish Second*' published by Penguin.) Since a seat in Parliament did not become possible, Indira Gandhi gave him a big post in the Government. In 1968 he was appointed Governor of all states in the North-east: Assam, Nagaland, Manipur, Meghalaya and Arunachal. No Governor ever held charge of so many states.

At that time the Naga problem was at its most critical point.

After the dissolution of the Peace Mission, at the request of the Underground Nagas I had gone to Delhi from Kohima for having the ceasefire period extended. In Delhi, subject to the convenience of the Prime Minister, I used to get a date fixed for the next round of Naga talks with her. On return I would inform the Nagas of the extended ceasefire period and the date of their next meeting and talks with the Prime Minister.

Seeing no prospect of a settlement, Underground Nagas had sent a 178-member contingent of their fighters to Yunnan Province of China, hundreds of kilometers away, to seek and bring arms. A big criticism of Indira Gandhi was voiced in Parliament when it became known that the Nagas had gone to bring arms from China. Indira Gandhi was accused of encouraging the traitorous Nagas by holding talks with them. Indira was scared by that criticism. Plots were afoot to remove her from office. Some of her own partymen along with those of the opposition were using the issue of her talks with the Nagas as a weapon to topple her.

In April 1968 Indira Gandhi came to Gauhati. She sent for me and introduced me to the new Governor, Brajkumar Nehru. He took me to the lawns of the circuit house, on the banks of the Brahmaputra, and walking there said: "Listen! From now on, neither you nor your Naga friends will go to Delhi for talks with the Prime Minister. I am now the representative of the Indian government here. Without permission from me there will be no direct contact with the Indian government by anyone. Go and tell your Naga friends in the jungle that from now on they will not be talking with the Prime Minister but with me. And to meet me you and your friends will have to come to Governor's House in Kohima and wait at the gate until I call you in!

He made a lot of such bullying talk.

Later I came to know that he had advised Indira Gandhi to give up her role in solving the Naga problem and give that responsibility to him, to save herself from direct criticism in that matter within and outside Parliament. He said, he would deal with the problem and if anything went wrong he would take the blame for it and not the Prime Minister. Indira seemed to have accepted his advice. It was after that Bijju Bhai, as Indira Gandhi called him, informed me in no uncertain terms that from then on he was the government in the Northeast.

But perhaps he did not feel confident. After the bullying, he asked me, "What do you think? Will the Nagas be ready to talk with me?"

"I'll find out", I said. "But if you want my personal opinion, I would say that you are not the first Governor of Assam. Five others have been in this job before you, of whom two died, the other three retired and nobody knows where they are. For how many years will you be the Governor? Five years, and if your term is extended, ten. All right, if you are the only government here, the Nagas can postpone peace talks for the duration of your term! And when you go, start them again! This is my view, but I'm not a Naga leader", I said.

He was shaken a bit. Trying to recapture his composure, he said: "I don't need your opinion! Go, speak to your Naga friends in the jungle and then get back to me! I shall be in Kohima, in a few days!"

I thought that the Nagas would not see his proposal as anything but an insult. How could they accept to lower the negotiations from the level of the Prime Minister to that of a governor? Earlier, in 1965, they had broken off negotiations with

Foreign Secretary, Gundevia. Then when Jaya Prakash Narayan had brought the Indian Cabinet Secretary, Dharma Vira, to Kohima, and told the Nagas that in the Indian Constitution the status of a Cabinet Secretary was that of a Deputy Minister, and therefore they should hold talks with him. But the Nagas had not agreed and turned down the proposal. They said Dharma Vira, too was a bureaucrat. Taking political decisions, and being sensitive to the aspirations of the Naga people would be beyond him, like it was for Gundevia!

After that, with the efforts of Mr. Chaliha, to which I too contributed, the talks were raised to a political level. In November 1965, when Chaliha and I went to Delhi to say to Prime Minister Shastriji that a cabinet minister should lead the government delegation to the Naga talks, Shastriji said with intense feeling: "Why a minister? I am ready to talk with them myself!"

Unfortunately, on January 11, 1966, when Shastriji was in Tashkent on the invitation of the Soviet Union, to settle the India-Pakistan conflict after the 1965 war between them, he died of a heart attack. He could not talk to the Nagas.

Returning to Kohima I went to the Naga leaders' camp to inform them of the Governor's proposal for talks with him. I was astonished and could hardly believe when, after two days of thinking it over, they accepted the proposal! They explained to me: "We have perhaps taken the talks to the top level without proper ground work. In Delhi, as you see, let alone finding a solution, the bureaucracy and leadership both have no time even to listen and comprehend what we are saying. Our view is hardly listened to there. Perhaps the basic issues could be sorted out in talks with the Governor. Then it may be easy to have talks at a higher level!"

Their argument was right but then they did not know Bijju Bhai, the Governor! Bijju Bhai could not conceive of a level higher other than his own. What he decided, he believed, would be what Indira Gandhi would accept. Having been an ambassador to America for years, he had come home to teach Indira Gandhi how to run a government. As far as the primitive Nagas were concerned, he would tell them what to do!

At Dimapur, the border town of Nagaland, in a high school, on April 20, 1968, the Naga leaders held talks with the Governor. Before that the Nagas had held talks with Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, in Delhi five times in two years. The talks in Delhi had not gone beyond presenting their respective viewpoints. The Prime Minister did not have the time for long serious discussions.

The first talk had started with Indira Gandhi, asking very politely: "I hope your journey from Kohima was comfortable! Are you comfortable in Delhi? Will you have coffee or tea?"

In talks with the Governor in Dimapur, the Naga delegation was led by their Governor, Jassie Hurrey, not by underground Naga Prime Minister, Kughato Sukhai, who usually led the talk in Delhi. This was the same Jassie, who fourteen years earlier, had not waited to meet the Prime Minister, Mr. Nehru, in Delhi, and had returned to Naga Hills to continue his work, leaving his two colleagues in Delhi to meet leaders there. He had then been in Delhi to see Mr. Nehru, with his colleagues Vizol and Magurtho, for a month. After an unfruitful meeting with the Home Minister, Pandit Pant, with other two Nagas, he had decided to return. He went to Delhi's Palam airport to catch a flight to Calcutta in the evening. From Calcutta he took a morning flight to Imphal. From there he went by bus to the Naga Border town of Mao and from there went underground.

At Dimapur talks Governor Brajkumar Nehru had brought along a written statement, most of which was about himself and the rest was bombast and boastful advice, like 'small nations have become meaningless now. I have seen myself at so many meetings of the United Nations I attended, that small nations are ignored. They beg for help, which is not given. By cutting yourself from India you will have no standing.'

On Naga attempts to bring arms from China, he said the Nagas were suffering from a "lemming complex".

What was this complex, nobody knew, except he himself. I was sitting outside when Jassie came to ask me what a lemming complex was?

I knew nothing, except that lemming was a small, mouse-like rodent of North America. When its population increased and became too big, they all went to the sea and drowned, committing mass suicide.

Perhaps Brajkumar Nehru wanted to say that like the lemmings the Nagas too were committing suicide by going to China for arms.

After reading out his sermon, Mr. Nehru left the meeting. Jassie, too did not come to the afternoon session of the talks. The remaining members of both parties began accusing each other of breaking the rules of the ceasefire agreement between them.

When Nehru came to know that the 'underground' Naga Governor, Jassie, did not come to the talks in the afternoon, he got very angry. Did the Nagas think they were his equal? Intelligence men milling around during the talks in Dimapur, had reported to him that Jassie had come out to see me before going away, and I may have advised him to stay away from the talks if Mr. Nehru did not come in the afternoon.

Mr. Nehru became very angry with me. He went to Delhi and complained against me to the Prime Minister, saying I had become an advisor to the Nagas, and should be straightaway asked to leave Kohima.

After that, I had gone to Bijju Bhai at the Governor's House in Shillong to tell him that because of an attack of the Indian Army on a Camp of the Naga Underground on June 7, 1968, the ceasefire was in the danger of being broken. If that happened, and peace in Nagaland ended, he, Bijju Bhai, would be held responsible. He has recorded my conversation with him in his autobiography in which he said he had a five-hour conversation with me.

On July 17, 1968, Nehru announced in Imphal that the Indian government had ended negotiations with Nagas. On August 2, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi announced in the Lok Sabha (Parliament) that the government was calling off talks with Naga rebels. In September I went to Delhi to tell the government that the situation would become difficult if talks ended and the Indian government would lose the peace it had established in Nagaland during the past five years.

In Delhi, Indira Gandhi told me that she had entrusted to Bijju Bhai all matters relating to Nagaland, and that Bijju Bhai was totally against my staying on in Kohima. I told her that in that case I would leave Nagaland.

On return to Dimapur from Delhi, I found a contractor of Viswema village waiting for me with his jeep vehicle at the airport. He made me sit in the back, covered the windows with curtains, and drove eleven miles to Chemokedima, where the Inner Line began and passes to enter Nagaland were checked. In accordance with an old British law, no Indian without an

Inner Line Permit was allowed to enter Nagaland. This permit was more difficult to get than a visa to a foreign country. If you submit a written request for it to a magistrate in Dimapur, he asked: "Why do you want to go to Kohima?" The reply that you wish to see a part of your country is considered unsatisfactory and you do not get a permit. Enter without a permit, you are arrested.

After the contractor of Viswema had smuggled me into Kohima unnoticed, I came to know that the Governor had ordered that I was not to be allowed into Nagaland and that if I managed to get in, I was to be arrested. Though the Deputy Commissioner of Kohima had received the order in secret, some Naga officers came to know and told others about it.

On hearing of the order to expel me from Kohima, some persons came looking for me from Khonoma village, twenty kilometers away to the west. Some day I may tell the story of the indomitable spirit of this village. It was burnt to ashes four times by the British army and twice by Indian forces. Each time it rose from the ashes.

From among the people from Khonoma, who came to our place in Kohima, Dirhey said, "We hear that the government is sending you away from here. We believe you must continue to live here, no matter if it be in jail. We have thought it over. This man, Gokeso, you see here, will adopt you as his son. He will give you some rice fields. We will build a house for you. Then we'll see how the government will turn you out! But there's no time to lose, as the police can come to arrest you any moment!"

Elderly Gokeso was the tallest and most well built of them. Wearing a white cotton Angami shawl, barefoot, copper

complexioned, with a broad forehead, long face and long arms, hair in a plait, he spoke only the Angami language.

That the Khonoma people would come to adopt me was beyond my imagination. Why were they doing that?

Dirhie said: "If you have objections, tell us. You have none? Then, Sevejo, bring the rooster!" Seveyjo, standing behind, was holding a rooster, a red crested, big domestic fowl. It was given to Gokeso. He twisted its neck and circled it five times over my head. Then they sent up cries of joy "Ho! Ho! Ho!" in unison, and the men from Khonoma made me the adopted son of Gokeso Mayasachu! Before I could collect my wits, I had become the adopted son of Gokeso, of Angami tribe, and a resident of Khonoma.

I still am.

The men left.

Nagas are mostly Christian. But they called no priest for the ceremony. Nor is there any practice among Christians of offering a rooster as sacrifice and circling it over a person's head for adoption. Nagas are of a tradition older than Christianity. They have their own ceremonies.

I went to town to buy a newspaper. The authorities then came to know that I was in Kohima.

At two-thirty that night about a hundred armed policemen came and laid a siege round my father-in-law's house where I stayed. I was called out. A Bengali police inspector who had come, said he had orders to arrest me and take me to the police station. My father-in-law, who had spent a lifetime as a magistrate, asked, if the Inspector had permission to enter his house? Did he have a warrant of arrest? A little flustered, the Inspector said, "No sir, I have only verbal orders of the Deputy Commissioner!"

The Inspector then phoned the Deputy Commissioner to ask again. He was awake waiting for the news of my arrest, to convey it to the Governor in Shillong. He said on the phone, "Tell them, no warrant is necessary!"

To avoid further debate, I went to the police station accompanied by the Inspector and sat on a bench there to pass the night.

Dawn had not broken over the Aradura range when 50 villagers came up and surrounded the police station. They were from Khonoma. In their hands were sharp hatchets and spears. Nervous, the Inspector came out, and the Khonoma villagers asked him: "This man under arrest is of our family. What is his crime? We want to know!"

Beyond saying that the orders to arrest me were from above, the Inspector had little to say.

He then rang up the district administration and asked for more police force to break the siege the villagers had laid.

At the crack of dawn my father-in-law came. Looking at the people besieging the place, he said to me, "Tell the people of Khonoma to go home! If they make trouble, tension will rise and they will be victimized. As far as you are concerned, the government will see to it that you leave. But the people of Khonoma will have to live here. Fighting for you, they will become targets of government wrath and will suffer. Tell them to desist from staging a show of force and go home!"

Understanding the problem I pleaded with my adopted father to take the villagers back. I told him that I would fight my battle by myself and he was not to worry.

They left.

It is said that between Nagas and Indians there is a big divide!

Chapter 2

Governor's Autobiography

A boastful account of his tenure as Governor, in 663 pages, has been given by Brajkumar Nehru in his autobiography. In its seventh chapter, on page 510, he says, "the most important stage of solving the problem of Nagaland was my five hour talk with Harish Chandola in my office at Shillong. This newspaper correspondent was sent by Shastriji (Lal Bahadur, the Prime Minister), as his representative to Nagaland, so that he could send the Prime Minister ideas and suggestions for a solution of the Naga problem, independent of the government's approach and stand."

"Shri Chandola doubtless gave right advice to the Prime Minister, but he fell in love with a daughter of Shri Kevichusa. Kevichusa was an open supporter of the underground force of Phizo".

This comment in print is a shining example of how ignorant high government officials can be, and how easily they take for truth the wicked, motivated falsehoods of their subordinates.

Five years before being sent to Kohima by Prime Minister, Lal Bahadur Shastri, I was the Northeast correspondent of *The Time of India* in Shillong. At that time, I had married Mr. Kevichusa's daughter in Shillong, not in Kohima. After that

I had worked as a journalist in Africa and East Asia for three years based in Cairo, Egypt. After that, Shastriji, in the course of his peace diplomacy had asked me to leave my newspaper job and go to Kohima.

How upset the entire lot of officials in Delhi, Shillong and Kohima was over my being sent to Nagaland by the Prime Minister, and how they worked behind the scene to get me out of there is an interesting story, which I shall probably recount later. They did not have the guts to openly confront Shastriji over my appointment. They took recourse to slander to suggest that I was unfit to be trusted with that responsibility. The story of my amorous entanglement in 1964 was part of their lies.

If Governor Nehru had taken the trouble to read the reports of the previous Governor, he perhaps would not have written such a baseless lie. He would have come to know that in 1958, the previous Governor, General Shrinagesh, too, had expressed unhappiness over my marriage to a Naga girl, and, had tried to send me out of Shillong, by writing a personal letter to Mr. Frank Moraes, the editor of *The Times of India*. His argument was that by marrying a Naga, I had become a supporter of the Nagas, and was sending pro-Naga dispatches to the paper. It was beyond his understanding that an Indian should sympathize with Naga thinking and criticize generals and governors.

All I had written in the paper on the 1960 agreement between some Nagas and the Indian government was that the Indian government was reaching an agreement with its own Naga officials, not with those who were fighting. The fight was between the Government and the Naga Underground. What was the point of coming to an agreement with those Nagas

with whom the Government had no dispute? What would the government gain?

Mr. A. Kevichusa, retired from the Indian Administrative Service, was a Naga of the Angami tribe. He had been appointed as an officer in Assam in 1925. He retired in 1957 as the Assam State Transport Secretary and Commissioner. He was from Khonoma village which was also Zapuphizo's village. But the Nagas knew that because of Mr. Kevichusa being in government service, Zapuphizo had not hidden his hostility towards him. Threats of death were sent to him.

Later, Underground Nagas killed two of his sons, one after another. He was elected to the Lok Sabha (Parliament) as the first member from Nagaland, in 1971.

But by making Brajkumar Nehru the Governor, Indira Gandhi had given him the right to create his own truth. He never felt the need to know facts.

For five full hours what he talked with me is not recorded in his book. Maybe I may know it some day. From the British our senior Civil Service officers had learnt the art of posing superior by mocking others. In his 663 pages of autobiography this skill has been put to good use.

He sent to the Prime Minister and other officials in Delhi a report of his so-called five-hour talk with me. How much of it was true is difficult to tell. Murukot Ramunni of Kerala, who had come from the Indian Air Force to the Naga country to administer it, has also written a fat book on Nagaland. It too talks of my five-hour talk with Brajkumar Nehru, exactly in the manner of Mr. Nehru's autobiography.

This is an unparalleled example of fabrication of government reports. On the basis of such reports how can Delhi ever come to know the truth?

Mr. Nehru's family has come in for extensive portrayal in this autobiography. The birth, care and early education of Brajkumar Nehru, and to an extent of his father, Brajlal Nehru, took place in Anand Bhavan in Allahabad, under the guardianship of his grandfather's younger brother, Motilal Nehru, and his wife, Swarup Rani (parents of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru). Brajkumar's grandfather, Nandlal, had died in 1882 in an outbreak of dysentery at the age of 42. Brajkumaar writes about Swarup Rani in whose home he was brought up: "She was a weak-minded, illiterate, quarrelsome woman, who could not brook the truth in any form. She took all her cues from her widowed sister, Bibi, who lived with her. And Bibi could not bear to see anyone happy. Swarup Rani had no standing in the house, and nobody took the least notice of her."

A lot has been written about the Nehru family but no one else has ever portrayed Swarup Rani in the above terms.

The book bristles with accounts of the shoddiness of Indian goods, and manners. The Governor writes that once his uncle, Biharilal Nehru, had to go to bed clad in a khadi (hand-spun yarn) dhoti (lower garment). In the morning, when he woke up he found both his thighs bloodied by the rough khadi fibres! Khadi was that rough, he said. Prime Minister Nehru wore it all his life!

Priced at five hundred and ninety five rupees and published by Viking-Penguin, if you read this book carefully, you will find it filled with prejudice and mockery. It describes the way a drunk Motilal Nehru kicked with his boots dishes cooked for Jawaharlal Nehru's wedding, spattering food all over the kitchen. The way His Excellency, Ambassador Brajkumar

Nehru, got rid of the Prime Minister's Secretary, Parmeshwar Narain Haksar, from his residence in Washington so as to make room for his own mother at the dinner given by Indira Gandhi to President Lyndon Johnson, on the eve of her departure from America. This was done because of shortage of chairs at the Ambassador's residence! "Even otherwise, Haksar was the junior-most among us", he wrote. Ambassador Nehru on retirement after a lifetime of holding top posts, dreamt of a seat in Parliament and a Ministership.

To realize his dream he left no stone unturned. He wrote that Haksar came into contact with Communists in 1930 as a student in London, and stayed a leftist all his life.

The reports written by Brajkumar Nehru and his cohorts, especially officials posted in the Naga region, are pure poison. To call the reports false would be belittling the deadliness of the poison these contain!

It took the Governor a year to send me out of Nagaland. And this, inspite my telling Indira Gandhi that if her Bijju Bhai was dead set on not having me in Nagaland, I was prepared to leave Kohima on my own.

But Brajakumar Nehru did not wait. On the very second night of my return to Kohima from Delhi, he sent 100 policemen to my father-in-law's house where I was staying, to surround it, and got me arrested. The next morning, my brother-in-law, Krilie Kevichusa, was getting married. He later became the Home Secretary of the state, and the Chairman of the State Public Service Commission. I was charged with staying in Nagaland without a permit, even when I had been sent there by the Prime Minister himself! (as Mr. B.K. Nehru himself writes in his book.)

What did living 'without permission' mean? Was Nagaland not a part of India? I had been living in Kohima for five years. Villagers of Khonoma had come to adopt me and say I was one of them, and that if I had done anything wrong I should be tried and punished there and not sent out of the state. I had letters from the offices of the Prime Minister, the Home Minister and others, saying "Shri Chandola is bringing a Naga leaders' delegation from Kohima to Delhi. Seats for them should be reserved on a flight."

After getting released on bail, I went with a bundle of such letters to a lawyer in Gauhati, Mr. Lahiri. On the basis of their contents, he filed an appeal in Gauhati High Court, saying if I was staying in Kohima without a permit, ministers of the Union Cabinet who had written the letters, were also responsible. During the hearing of the case against me filed by the State Government, the Prime Minister and other ministers too should be questioned on abetting my stay there.

I was then called to Delhi. There the Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister, Mr. P.N. Haksar, told me, laughing, "You, my dear friend, have become a litigant (mukadmebaaz)!"

"No!" I said, "You people are the ones who brought a case against me, against which I had to go to Gauhati High Court!"

"Withdraw your case", he advised.

"If the Nagaland Government withdraws its case against me, my appeal against it will automatically fall," I said.

At this meeting the Prime Minister's Joint Secretary, Mr. Sushital Banerji, was also present.

Mr. Haksar said, "All right, we'll tell the Nagaland Government to withdraw its case. But as the Prime Minister

(Indira Gandhi) says, Bijju Bhai, the Governor, will not allow you stay in Nagaland, promise us that you will not go back there. You've worked for many years for English newspapers in India and abroad. One of them will surely give you a job. Try that. And don't go back to Nagaland."

Searching for a good job and landing one is not easy. There were only four English newspapers of standing in Delhi at the time. I tried my luck, and got a position as South Asia correspondent of *The Statesman*.

Underground Nagas came to know of my expulsion through their own sources. On my return from Delhi I found someone sent by them waiting for me at Dimapur airport to take me straight to their camp in Chidema. There, the Naga leaders said to me, "Your government is being unjust to you. You better come and stay with us from now on. Let your family stay on in Kohima. Our families too are also living in villages and towns, away from us. We shall look after your family just as we do after ours. We shall not let it be in want. You need not return to Kohima. We'll send for your things. If you go there we know you will be arrested."

I did not accept their offer. I said I had not come to Nagaland on their invitation. I had been sent by Prime Minister, Lal Bahadur Shastri. If I stayed with them—the Underground—the charge of Brajkumar Nehru and his officials that I was helping the underground, would be proved. "Forgive me, but I shall return to Kohima and face whatever lies in store for me there", I told them.

I shall never forget their kindness. Assembled there to persuade me to stay with them was the elderly Vice-President of the Naga National Council, Mr. Imkongmeren, Naga

Prime Minister, Kughato Sukhai, his Secretary, Angam, Home Minister, Biseto Medom, the Speaker of the Naga Assembly, Ramyo, and some others. When I left their camp to return to Kohima, they were saddened, and kept watching at me until I was out of sight. They knew, to break peace talks with them, the government was making me a scapegoat.

Today, I think of my companion in Shillong, Haleem Mohammad Khan, and the first Nagaland Chief Minister, Shilu Ao.

Haleem had come to Shillong after studying motor car engineering in England. On relocating from Shillong to Gauhati, he took with him his framed shoe with which he had kicked the future Chief Minister, Shilu Ao, into a hotel, and then took it to Dibrugarh, Calcutta, and the United Arab Emirates, where he went to work later.

Shilu died some thirty six years ago. I feel sad when I think of him. By making him a Chief Minister from a petty job, the government befuddled his mind. The first thing he did after becoming Chief Minister was to abandon his village-bred wife and children. He thought she didn't have what it takes to be the wife of a Chief Minister. Then he married an English-speaking and English-school educated daughter of a rich trader of Mokokchung. There's no shortage of English-speaking, English-school educated young women, but there is of Chief Ministers wanting to marry them. The abandoned wife however decided to educate herself, qualify, and become self-supporting. She studied and passed high school, then B.A., M.A. and B.Ed., became a teacher and eventually the headmistress of a school.

Within two years of taking office, the State's politics threw Shilu out. He was not a particularly clever person, and

liquor was his weakness. The State Assembly chose as new chief minister, Mr. T.N. Angami, of the same party as Shilu's. Shilu, who had thought chief ministership was permanent, broke down. He went off to live in Mokokchung, a hundred kilometers away from Kohima, but couldn't adjust there either. He became deranged. He was then lodged in the Dimapur jail in a lunatic ward, and died there. Poor Shilu! The Indian government showed him green pastures, beguiled him, kicked him up to the top and uprooted him from his moorings. On being removed from office, he lost his mental balance.

Today in India, those who are placed in chief ministers' chairs by ruling parties and then get thrown out by either the legislators or by voters in elections, do not end their lives like Shilu. They make such a big pile of money while in office that their remaining days are spent in great comfort.

Chapter 3

Peace Mission

In 1963, when Nagaland was created, floodgates of money were opened by Delhi for Kohima, enriching Nagaland contractors, suppliers and ministers. In place of earthern, thatch-roofed, wood-framed beautiful houses of woven bamboo walls, ungainly structures of cement-concrete started coming up in disorderly profusion in Kohima. Kohima is in an earthquake zone. One jolt from below can reduce the new buildings into a pile of rubble. Digging into the hills, razing them to make them level, Kohima has tried to develop in the trendy architectural style of our times. But this odd, clumsy growth has not fully diminished its natural beauty.

Southwest of Kohima, the bamboo-covered slopes of the Japvu peak, 10,000 feet high, come down to embrace the diagonal Barail range. And the Barail, passing through Cachar, proceeds towards Bangladesh and ends in the Bay of Bengal. Opposite Japvu begins another range. A hundred meters up on it, one finds the first Angami dwellings of Kohima village, which climb right up to the tops of the hill. There used to be triangular close set Angami houses, with horn-shaped beams on which were carved red and black coloured tigers, lizards and other fauna of folk tales. These carved figures scrutinized all that went by.

With a population of over 25,000, Kohima is the biggest village of this area. It is divided into four parts, or khels as they are called. Below is Chotonoma-khel, then comes Dafujuma-khel, above which is Poochajuma and then the biggest on the top, Lisema-khel.

In 1882 Chotonoma gave a small portion of its land, rising from the bazaar, to the American Baptist Mission that came to preach Christianity here. Upon it, the first padre, Reverend C.D. King, in 1883, and then in 1887 the Reverend Sydney White Reibenberg, built a small chapel and a house to live in. The place came to be known as Mission Compound. After two years of residence here, acquainting himself with the place and, understanding it, Rev. Reibenberg returned to America for medical studies, and after qualifying, came back and took abode here to render medical aid to villagers. His wife, Hetty, fell ill, died in 1908, and is buried here.

Under the leadership of Khonoma village, Kohima put up a strong resistance against the coming of the British. The British established in 1879 their first stockade (a settlement behind a wall of thick tall wooden posts, a wooden fortress) below Chotonoma-khel of Kohima. From here, the first British Deputy Commissioner, G.H. Damant, went with 80 soldiers to Khonoma village, 20 kilometers away, to proclaim the power of the new administration. There, hidden behind megaliths (tall stones), put up in memory of clan feasts held by residents following a good harvest, villagers sprang on the troops and killed Damant and many soldiers. They then chased the remaining to Kohima.

Of the 80 soldiers of Damant, only three managed to make it back to their wooden stockade of Kohima. Some 27

fled to the plains through the jungle and reached their camp at Chemokedima, 30 kilometers down. Then the villagers of Khonoma and Kohima together surrounded the wooden British Stockade and made it impossible for anyone to come out. Whoever tried was speared and killed. The fortress remained without water. Khonoma and Kohima villagers threw flaming torches into it, to set fire to bamboo huts within and make those inside come out and be speared. Food inside ran out. Rations were reduced to one-fourth and water two drops at a time. The shadow of death hovered over the British and their soldiers in the stockade. They were beginning to consider terms of surrender to be able to flee alive from the siege.

But on October 22, 1879, a Naga turncoat carried, hidden in the coils of his long hair, a letter from one of the besieged British officers, Cowley, to British troops in Imphal, in Manipur. Cowley wrote asking for reinforcements at the earliest. In response, Colonel J. Johnson came rushing up with 3,000 British and Manipuri soldiers to save the lives of his fellow countrymen in Kohima. It is a long story.

Eighty years later, to help negotiate a peace settlement between the Indian government and the Nagas, a three member Nagaland Peace Mission arrived to stay at this very Kohima Mission Compound in 1964.

Earlier that year, from January 31, a three-day annual session of the Nagaland Baptist Church Council had taken place at Okha, the main town of the Lotha tribe. Five thousand Naga representatives took part in it. By then the Naga people had suffered badly from atrocities of the Indian army. Whole villages had been evacuated by soldiers and their inmates placed in barbed-wire enclosures, with movement in and out strictly controlled. Those passing through were searched thoroughly to

see that they did not smuggle food or anything else to militants outside. Villagers in such camps began dying of hunger and disease.

Nagas elders at their meeting at Okha looked for a way out of this dreadful situation. They proposed to set up a Peace mission of Indian leaders of standing to conduct talks between the government and the Naga fighters. Apart from Jaya Prakash Narayan and the Assam Chief Minister, Bimla Prasad Chaliha, they nominated to this Mission Shankarrao Deo, a former president of the Congress Party, who could not come due to illness. The lone non-Indian member of the Mission was the Reverend Michael Scott of England. All the three members came to Kohima and stayed in the Mission Compound. After many consultations with the Governor of Assam, representing the Indian government, and the Naga fighters, the Mission drew up a plan to stop military operations and fighting and start peace talks between the parties involved in the conflict. With much effort they got the two sides to sign a ceasefire agreement to end fighting and start talks to find a solution through negotiations.

The leading member of the peace mission was the Chief Minister of Assam, Bimla Prasad Chaliha. He was held in great respect in the whole Northeast. He was from Sibsagar district, next to Naga Hills, and was a former president of the Assam State Congress. He had in 1953 visited many Naga villages. Because of his simplicity and sincerity, he was a liked by all—from ministers in Delhi to Nagas, Mizos, Boros and Kachaaris in the north-east. Dark, tall and always clad in a long close-collar coat, over a dhoti, chewing betelnut, he looked like a tribal himself.

The scholarly-looking Jaya Prakash Narayan was an all-India leader who had won great acclaim for his opposition to Mrs. Indira Gandhi's Emergency regime of 1975.

Reverend Michael Scott had been a padre of the Anglican Bishop in Mumbai in 1935, and from 1937 to '39, a priest at St. Paul's Church in Calcutta. When the Anglican Church sent him in 1943 to Johannesburg, South Africa, to work there, he put up a strong opposition to the policy of racial discrimination of the government of South Africa. Arrested along with some Indians he went to jail there. At that time Sir Maharaj Singh was the representative of India in South Africa. He made Michael Scott an advisor to the Indian delegation which was going to the United Nations in 1947 to protest against Apartheid.

Born in 1907, Scott, in 1964, was ill and weak, but dedicated as ever to protecting human rights.

Having brought about an agreement to halt the Naga-Indian Army fighting, and having laid the foundation of reaching a settlement through talks, the moral stature of the three-members peace mission was sky high, beyond the control of government powers.

Officials of the Indian government were displeased with its high profile and high standing. The mission had put the Naga hostiles, whom the government had been trying to eliminate for years, on an equal footing with the Government of India. The Administration always considered itself superior to Nagas and this new equality was a blow to its pride. As long as the moral authority of the Peace Mission remained intact, Naga opinion could not be brushed aside. The mission had been formed because of the failure of Government policies. Finding the Peace Mission in control, officials tried to reduce

its influence. They mocked the mission and tried to make fun of it. They also tried to divide its members and prevent it from working as a team.

The Indian government had appointed the Indian External Affairs Ministry Secretary, Y.D. Gundevia, along with some Ministry officials, as members of its delegation to hold talks and negotiate with Nagas. Why was the External Affairs Secretary made to lead the Indian team? Were the talks with foreigners?

Gundevia came to Kohima and began referring to Chaliha mockingly as Reverend Chaliha. Reverend Scott was considered a friend of the Nagas. Chaliha was being placed with Scott. It was easy to make accusations against Scott. He was a foreigner and had helped the Naga leader, Zapuphizo, in getting British citizenship and staying on in London. As a rebel against India, Zapuphizo was not considered a friend.

It was not difficult for Indian officials to portray Scott as the representative of Zapuphizo and separate him from the other two members of the Peace Mission. Rumours were set afloat about his partiality, implying that the Naga revolt was sponsored by foreign missionaries. Cleverly and systematically, an impression was created that Scott was not the right man for India.

The most liked and intelligent member of the mission was undoubtedly Chaliha. As a Chief Minister, he had easy, direct access to the Government in Delhi. Only with attacks on him could the reputation of the peace mission be brought under doubt.

From the very day he came to Kohima, Gundevia began referring to Chaliha as Reverend Chaliha. Government delegates followed suit and began projecting him in the image

of the Reverend Scott. Only Jaya Prakash Narayan was shown respect and portrayed as a true well-wisher of India.

When in Kohima, all the three members stayed together at the Mission Compound house. Three kilometers away, by felling a pine forest, a red-tin roofed Rajbhavan (Governor's House) was built. Vishnu Sahay, after retiring from his high position in the Indian Civil Service, came as Assam Governor, to stay in Shillong. He was the one who had signed the agreement on cessation of hostilities or ceasefire, as the representative of the President of India. For talks with the peace mission members he sometimes came to the Mission Compound.

One day, he said to Jaya Prakash Narayan, with much concern: "You must surely by finding it difficult to live here! There will be no vegetarian food here, and no decent toilet arrangements. Hot water must be a luxury! Come and stay at Rajbhavan! (Governor's residence). All facilities are there and you will be more comfortable!"

People went speechless with astonishment when they learnt later that Jaya Prakash Narayan had actually agreed to go and stay in Rajbhavan! Michael Scott continued to stay in the Mission Compound and had no problems, in spite of the difference in Indian and British way of living. Jaya Prakash Narayan used to come to Kohima for a few days at a time. Chaliha, on his visits to Kohima stayed in the Mission Compound, without any problem. Actually he preferred to stay in the Mission Compound, away from the crowd of officials in Shillong. The atmosphere of a Naga village suited his nature and temperament.

This first attack on the Peace Mission was made by Governor Vishnu Sahay and his fellow officials, by taking away Jaya Prakash Narayan to Rajbhavan from the Mission Compound.

Its three members could no longer be together. Raj Bhavan was surrounded by armed guards and no common Naga could approach it. The Mission Compound house had free entry for all, including Underground Nagas. Visitors used to come there to meet Jaya Prakash Narayan. By shifting to Raj Bhavan he cut off his contacts with Naga people and established them with the Governor and his officials.

The biggest facility Jaya Prakash Narayan got in the Governor's House was the assistance and care of its government staff. At that time he used to travel all over India on his political work. He considered himself an all-India leader and had to visit many places in the country. He used to be in Kohima one day, with Vinoba Bhave at Pavnaar the next day and then in Bombay or Madras in the days following. Rajbhavan officials made his travel arrangements. It was rumoured that his travel expenses also came from Rajbhavan funds. That facility was certainly not available in Mission Compound. Only officers had the right of entry to Raj Bhavan. Transported to their company, he listened to them mostly, which was criticism of Rev. Scott. They told him that Rev. Scott was not only a supporter of Zapuphizo, but one who accused the Indian army of killing Nagas. He was out to malign and discredit India in the eyes of the world. He had to be stopped, the officers said.

Chapter 4

The First Day of Peace

Nowhere except in the Naga-country had a day dawned with such hopes as September 6, 1964, the first day of ceasefire and peace. The day also brought to an end heavy rains and the beginning of a sunny autumn. After months of cloud-filled dark skies, it brought sunlight so bright and warm that the wet earth dried up in a few hours.

It seemed as if the radiance of the day had driven away the shadow of death cast by a decade of fighting.

To offer thanks to this dawn of peace, people dressed in their festive best and went to churches for thanks giving. Villages held peace meetings.

Nature and man united to set the stage for this day. On the horizon white clouds, free of water, frisked like fawns. On terraced fields where rice was ripening, the fragrance of its flowers filled the air. Oak, rhododendron and cherry trees, after bathing in rain, were drying themselves under a generous sun. Hope blended with light lay on the ground.

No more would soldiers break into homes, beat people, drive them out and put them into camps ringed with barbed wire. Life was expected to become peaceful, like in the past.

On Kohima Mission Compound ground strolled the tall and bent figure of the British priest, Reverend Michael Scott,

deep in thought. Five kilometers away, in Chidema village, Nagas put up bamboo and thatch huts. The main one was called Shanti Shivir or Peace Camp. India-Naga talks were to begin there.

I went to Chidema where I met uncle Dobu, of Khonoma village, who, I learnt, was the commandant of the camp. Ten years of life underground had turned his thin, dusky face copper coloured.

Six years later, uncle Dobu had become speaker of the Naga Underground National Assembly, or Ho-Ho, and was subsequently killed by the Indian army near Kohima High School. He was sleeping there in a hut under some trees when the army surrounded the place and shot him one morning.

At Chidema camp I had to meet a friend, Mr. Isak Chishi Swu. When I was in Shillong as the Northeast correspondent of the *The Times of India* in 1957, Isak was a final year student at St. Edmund's College there. After obtaining his B.A. degree he returned to his village, Kilomi, in Sema Naga area, to teach in a school there. He was a good football player. After a match one day he disappeared. The Underground Nagas had called him over, we learnt later. In 1964 he was the Foreign Secretary of the Underground Naga Government, and the spokesman of the Naga delegation to the peace talks which were to begin in Chidema.

Very few people may have seen the faint smile that crosses Isak's face, breaking its knife-edge sharpness. He took me inside his bamboo hut, wearing that thin smile and asked, "Have you come here to spy for the Indian government?"

Somebody had probably told him that I had been sent to Kohima by the Prime Minister.

"Have you objections to that?" I countered.

I did not know where uncle Dobu had taken my small son, Prabhat, who had accompanied me.

On coming to Kohima I had met another Naga friend, Ramyo. He used to be a student of law at Gauhati University during my days as newspaper correspondent in Assam, and was perhaps the best football player in Northeast. After studies, he went to Imphal, as his village of Toloi was in the Naga area of Manipur. Doing odd jobs in Imphal, he was not happy. When talks to end fighting and negotiate peace were announced, he came to Kohima. Kohima was a very small town at that time and he ran into me. On hearing that I was going to peace camp at Chidema, he came with me to meet Underground leaders. At the main gate of the camp the guards of the Naga army asked the purpose of our visit. They went in and came back with their camp commandant, uncle Dobu. He didn't know Ramyo, and told him to wait, while he took me and my son Prabhat into the camp.

Talking with Isak Swu I remembered Ramyo waiting at the gate, and I told Isak to let him in. Isak said: "We have no information about whom he wants to meet. I don't know of his meeting anyone here."

The same Ramyo, a year later, in 1965, became a prominent member of the Naga Underground Parliament and a leading light of the Naga delegation in talks with Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, and finally the Home Minister of the Naga Underground Government. Ten years later, in 1975, it was he who, with Zapuphizo's younger brother, Keviyallei and three others, signed the Shillong Accord with the Governor or the government of India. The Accord accepted the Constitution

of India and agreed that the Naga army would give up arms and deposit them at Chidema Peace Camp. After surrendering arms, it had been arranged for Naga fighters to stay at the Peace Camp until the Government of India rehabilitated them in jobs. Even today, 35 years later, some Naga fighters are still staying there, harbouring hopes of rehabilitation. The arms they had laid down and deposited in the camp are on display in a sort of museum there.

Some Nagas, who later formed the National Socialist Council of Nagalim (NSCN) were staunchly opposed to the Shillong Accord. They asked, why was the banner of Naga independence raised, thousands of Nagas laid down their lives in 20 years of fighting and many more had to go through severe ordeals, if the Nagas had to stay with India?

Fierce criticism of those who signed the Shillong Accord was made. Escaping an armed attack in Dimapur, Ramyo left for the United States, to stay with his brother, a medical doctor there, where he died in a road accident. His body, brought to Nagaland lies buried at Zubza, fifteen kilometers below Kohima.

Ramyo was a person of very sharp intellect. During the Delhi negotiations with the Indian government, he rose to a high stature in Naga politics. But he was always in a hurry. There were issues which needed to be considered over a length of time, but Ramyo did not want to wait and took quick decisions. Sometimes his decisions were right, but not so when the situation was complex and unfavourable.

I was a friend of his and got into trouble. He corresponded with the Indian government on behalf of the Naga movement. Before sending some letters to Delhi he sometimes showed

them to me, just to check the language. The letters had errors of grammar, sentences were incomplete or the language awkward. I corrected them to the best of my ability.

Getting to know of this, Governor, Brajkumar Nehru, reported my role to Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi. His charge was that by staying in Kohima I had become an advisor to the Underground and was drafting its letters. Indira Gandhi knew of my contacts. As a matter of fact it was because of my contacts with the Nagas that Shastriji had asked me to resign my newspaper job and go to Nagaland to help in the peace process.

When the Peace Mission was disbanded in 1966, to keep the peace talks going, I was asked to remain in Kohima. Either with letters or messages, the Underground Naga Government used to ask me to go to Delhi from Kohima, to ask Delhi to extend the ceasefire for a certain period of time and finalize the dates for its talks with the Prime Minister. In Delhi, at meetings with Indira Gandhi and Mr. P.N. Haksar (Secretary to the Prime Minister and her political guru from 1966 to 1972) I discussed these matters and then returned to inform the Naga leaders of Delhi's decisions. Let me add here a few words about the clever tactics of the Indian government. In Delhi if it was decided, say, that the peace period be extended by three months, not six, as requested, and the Prime Minister would want the next round of talks with the Nagas in August, not in July, or if it would be all right for Naga leaders to visit London to meet Zapuphizo, etc., I was to orally convey to Naga leaders those decisions. The Prime Minister's office would send a written report on that to the Governor of Nagaland in Shillong. And from there that information would be sent to Kohima, to the Chief Secretary

of the Government of Nagaland. The Chief Secretary would then convey the decisions orally to Chidema Peace Camp of the Nagas. The Indian government did not want to enter into any written communication with the Underground. It thought that writing letters may make the Underground claim that the Indian government recognized their organization.

Top Delhi officials wondered how the negotiations would accomplish what ten years of fighting had not been able to. How could the Nagas be bullied into accepting the Indian Constitution?

The Indo-Naga Peace talks began on September 23, 1964, in Chidema, near Kohima. Even after many meetings no progress was made under the leadership of Gundevia, the main Indian negotiator. The talks were initially held with three Naga leaders, Jassie Hurrey, Underground Governor of Japvu State, Naga Foreign Secretary, Isak Chishi Swu (now the President of the Underground Republic of Nagalim), and Brigadier Thinuselie of the Naga Army.

Gundevia initially said the talks would be held under the Constitution of India. The Nagas did not agree, as they said they were independent. In the beginning Gundevia used to pat the Naga delegates on their back, hold their hands and tell them funny stories to make friends. But the Nagas were alert, cautious and did not respond.

The talks were being held in the peace camp built by Nagas above Chidema village. Below, were three parts of the village or khels. By its side was a thick forest of Naga oak. Naga top leaders lived in the forest mostly, because it provided them security. Forest floor of dry leaves made noise when stepped upon, alerting those there of someone approaching.

Then one day the Nagas brought a huge table they got made. They seated the Indian delegation on one side of it, and themselves sat on the other. That ended the problem of Gundevia pawing them during the talks.

Even today that table is there in Chidema Peace Camp.

Attempts were made to include the State government of Nagaland, its chief minister, Shilu Ao, and other ministers in the Indian delegation. But the Underground said the talks were between India and Nagas, and not among Nagas. The Nagas had no quarrel among themselves.

After much debate it was decided that India was free to include anyone in its delegation. And so, under Foreign Secretary, Gundevia, the Chief Minister of Nagaland, Shilu Ao, was made a delegate. Under Indian protocol a Chief Minister has a higher rank than a Secretary. But nobody cared for protocol in Nagaland.

All through the talks, Gundevia kept asking: "My dear friend, Isak (Foreign Secretary of the Underground), tell me, what do you mean when you say the Nagas have always been independent. What do you mean by independence?"

In the Naga delegation only Isak spoke good English, so questions were put to him or through him. Isak did not answer that question.

If and when this question was not asked, the Indian delegation made accusations against Nagas of breaking the rules of the ceasefire: they were told that underground soldiers were seen in uniform in such and such village. To be in uniform and armed was forbidden under the ceasefire rules. The attempt was to put pressure on the Nagas with repeated accusations. And if peace was disturbed anywhere, to blame the Nagas for it.

One day, the morning talks went on for a long time and the Nagas invited the Indian delegation to lunch. In a congenial atmosphere, amidst food and warmth, Gundevia repeated his question of what the Nagas meant by 'independence'?

Isak replied: "Mr. Gundevia, are you independent or not?"

Gundevia said, "Of course we are!"

Isak said, "Then you certainly would know the meaning of independence!"

Its meaning couldn't be different for Indians and Nagas!

The talks remained bogged down in accusations and counter-accusations.

The barrage of false accusations reached a dramatic point in February 1965, when the Indian team said that by firing on Indian troops in Longchang, the Nagas had violated the ceasefire. But when the matter was investigated, the Indian Army division commander withdrew the charge and said no firing had taken place.

The Indians believed in the beginning that the Nagas were offended because the Indian government had all along slighted them and not talked to them. Delhi thought by holding direct talks with Underground Nagas, their ego would be satisfied and they would accept to being a part of India.

Delhi also believed that the Naga underground was upset because it reached an agreement with Assam for forming a separate administrative unit of the Nagas. A new territory was created by joining the Tuensng Division of the North East Frontier Agency and the Naga Hills district of Assam. At that time, Shilu Ao was a Nayeb Tehsildar, or Extra Assistant Commissioner, in Nowgong district of Assam. From that low office, he was made, without election, the Chief Executive, and

then the Chief Minister of the new state of Nagaland. But the position of a Naga Chief Minister was for show. The real power remained in the hands of Delhi.

Delhi had hoped that by creating a separate state, with an English name of Nagaland, the Nagas would become happy and stop their struggle! But that did not happen! The Indian government then thought, all right, we'll talk with them, just as the Peace Mission wants us to, and mollify them. That too did not bring about an agreement.

The Naga delegation had said in the beginning that the Nagas had always been independent and they were fighting to safeguard that independence. They were not rebelling against India.

The British had annexed only a portion of Naga territory towards the end of the nineteenth century. After the British left, the Nagas thought they could revert back to independence. But India considered that former British territory a part of itself. In the beginning the Nagas resorted to various methods of peaceful non-cooperation: boycotting Indian politics, elections, and taxes. But when the Delhi government sent army to put down their resistance, the Nagas resorted to arms.

Between September 1964 and April 1965 the Nagas had nine meetings with Gundevia's team from Delhi. I shall write later in greater detail about the issues that came up during those meetings. Gundevia wanted to make the Nagas speak the language of surrender. He wanted them to say, "All right, we now accept the Constitution of India and the Indian Republic." Before getting to it, other questions such as safeguarding the future of Naga peoples' way of life and their social set up had to be considered, as those were of primary importance to the Nagas.

Not obtaining their acceptance, Gundevia lost patience and took recourse to threats. He accused the Nagas of breaking the conditions of the ceasefire, and threatened to send troops to villages again, because, he said, the Naga Federal Government —the Underground government of the Nagas—was collecting taxes from people and recruiting for its force.

Once the Naga team had sent me to Delhi for having the ceasefire period extended by six months. But Delhi extended it by only one month and nine days, which expired on April 15, 1965. In his address to the budget session of the Nagaland State Assembly, Governor Vishnu Sahay said: "this extension of the ceasefire period is the last chance being given to Nagas to agree to the proposal of the Peace Mission, which had asked the Nagas to accept becoming a part of the Indian union voluntarily."

On December 29, 1964, to break an impasse in the talks, the Peace Mission had made proposals of its own to both sides. It accepted the Nagas' right to self-determination, but suggested that the Naga Federal Government (the Underground) should voluntarily utilize it in favour of joining the Indian Union. The Indian government should make it clear the kind of relations it wanted with the Nagas and the changes it was willing to make in its present set-up to include their political aspirations and the Naga Declaration of December 17, 1964.

To clarify their position, the Nagas had made a declaration on that date stating "the Nagas do not want war and are in favour of reaching an agreement with India in an atmosphere of peace".

Governor Vishnu Sahay held that the proposal of the Peace Mission was for the Nagas to agree to be a part of India, not

for their right to determine their own future. He said April 15, 1965, was the last date for them to agree to that proposal.

Gundevia's threat to again send Indian troops to Naga villages and Vishnu Sahay's setting up the deadline of April 15 for the acceptance of the Peace Mission's proposal, were clear provocations.

To obtain clarifications of the Peace Mission proposals, the Nagas called a session of their assembly (which they called Tatar Ho-Ho) at Wokha on 24 March, 1965. All three members of the Mission were invited to speak on their proposal and provide explanations. Jaya Prakash Narayan said, "I fought against the British for the freedom of the whole of India, and not just of my area in Bihar. And when freedom came I believed the whole of India, including Nagaland, was free!"

Present at this meeting of Tatar Ho-Ho, was the elderly Tangkhul Naga leader, R. Suisa, who earlier had been elected from North Manipur to Indian Parliament by a huge majority and who had spent a part of the period of his Parliament membership in Dum Dum jail of Calcutta, without knowing the reason of his arrest. He told Jaya Prakash Narayan, "We are well acquainted with your outstanding contribution to the struggle for freedom. We read in papers that you travelled to every part of India to rally the people for freedom. But we are sorry to say that we did not see you coming to this region to ask for our support in it. Neither did you ever raise the problem of Nagas, or say to us, come, take part in this independence struggle! You did not take us along with you. Have you now fallen in with the stand of the Indian government that Naga areas have come to India from the British as inheritance?"

Jaya Prakash Narayan offered explanations on other matters but not on this.

In February 1966, a Naga delegation arrived in Delhi for talks with Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi. The Chairman of the India League in America and a long-time resident of that Country, Mr. J.J. Singh, held a reception in honour of Jaya Prakash Narayan at Delhi's India International Centre. All members of the Naga delegation were invited to it.

Showering praises on Jaya Prakash Narayan and recalling his achievements, J.J. Singh said, "Jaya Prakashji's wife, Prabhawatiji, (who was present at the reception) was the first Indian woman to visit Naga villages."

I was sitting at a table with Isak Swu. Laughter bubbling in his eyes, Swu whispered to me, "Did you hear that? Prabhawatiji was the first Indian woman to visit Naga villages! And there you are, saying Nagas are Indians! Hear what your leaders say! In this hall, in the presence of Jaya Prakash Narayan, it is being said that an Indian woman visited Naga villages! He is speaking of two separate entities, Indians and Nagas."

In newspapers those days, much used to be written about Jaya Prakash Narayan's efforts to find a solution of the Naga problem. Two months earlier, talking to newsmen at Dabri, a village in Panjab, Jaya Prakashji had said, "Some people are of the opinion that the Naga problem can be solved by finishing off all Nagas. But I am a Gandhian. Each individual to me is as valuable as a cause. To kill an individual is like killing a cause."

Reading this in newspapers, the Nagas became agitated. When Jaya Prakash-ji came to Assam House in Delhi to meet the Nagas during their first visit for talks with Mrs. Gandhi, they reminded him of this statement of his and said: "How can you or anyone think that the Indian army can kill ten

lakh Nagas? You know that we live on the border of Burma. Thousands of Nagas live in Burma. Will the extermination of all Nagas ever be possible? How did you ever think of such a thing?"

Jaya Prakashji was upset. "I was talking of what the army had said. What appears in newspapers is not always correct", he explained.

The Nagas said, "It's two months since your speech was published. If it was incorrectly reported, you should have contradicted it!"

Hearing that, Jaya Prakashji believed he had lost the confidence of the Nagas. And he wondered, "What was the use of his remaining in Nagaland Peace Mission?" He resigned from Peace Mission that very next day!

Just a few months earlier, addressing the Naga Underground Assembly at Wokha, he had said: "Even at the risk to my life I shall stay fully involved in efforts to establish peace in Nagaland."

Jaya Prakashji had not been invited to the Peace Mission by Underground Nagas. It was the Nagaland Baptist Church Council that had asked three persons to take part in it for bringing peace, which they all had accepted gladly. The question of the militants' trust in him never figured at any time.

Later on, for months, the underground Nagas asked him to forgive them, saying it was perhaps rude of them to confront him with their question. He should come back to the Peace Mission, where he was needed. But he did not relent.

He knew his resigning was the first step to break the Peace Mission.

Jaya Prakashji left Nagaland, and yet he did not.

Whenever he came to Kohima he brought with him his friends and followers. Among them in the beginning was the former Chief Minister of Orissa, Nabakrushna Choudhry, who ran a well-known Gandhian Center in Angul in Orissa. Leaving his friends and followers in Kohima as his representatives, Jaya Prakash Narayan would go on his travels in India. Unlike Michael Scott, solving the Naga problem was not his only priority. A question arose over how his representatives were to live in Kohima? Who was to shoulder the responsibility of their expenses? Staying at Governor's residence, Jaya Prakash-ji got the Nagaland government to set up a Peace Centre for his retinue in Kohima. A large house was rented at government expense for them. On their food and transport, the Nagaland State government spent money. Transport facilities for them included drivers, vehicles and fuel. The self-respecting Nabakrushna Chowdhry did not think it proper to run a neutral, non-party body like his Peace Centre on Nagaland government expense. The Nagaland state government was against the peace talks, for its leaders felt that if the militants came to a settlement with India, those in power in the state would no longer be needed. Disagreeing with the idea of running a Peace Centre at government expense, Nabakrushna Chowdhry left Nagaland. Jaya Prakashji then brought in a Gandhian English lady, Marjorie Sykes, to run his Peace Center. She also left after a time. Finally he brought Dr. Aram from Tamilnadu. After coming over, Dr. Aram got married to a daughter of a Bengali employee of Kohima post office, Minoti, and established himself in Kohima. As long as the Nagaland government looked after the expenses of running the Peace Centre, Dr. Aram remained there as Jaya Prakashji's representative. When government money stopped, he left.

After Jaya Prakashji's resignation from the Peace Mission, the government machinery stepped up its attacks on the Rev. Michael Scott.

Scott was not too familiar with internal Naga politics. He was Zapuphizo's friend and supporter and did what Zapuphizo asked him to.

Naga society is divided in sixteen major tribes. There are other small ones too. In 1956, soon after the armed conflict began, Zapuphizo went across to East Pakistan, now Bangladesh. From there he went to Switzerland, and then to England. Many Nagas laid down their lives in fighting the Indian army. One of the leading Naga tribe in this fight was Sema, which has a large population. This was also the tribe that gave its educated to the struggle. The President of the Naga Underground government—then known as the Federal Government of Nagaland, Scato Swu, its Prime Minister, Kughato Sukhai, Foreign Secretary, Isak Chishi Swu, Defence Minister and army commander, Kaito, were all from the Sema tribe. They were united, organized and fought well. Michael Scott came to know them only after coming to Kohima. Scott being a friend of Zapuphizo, wanted him to negotiate with the Government of India during the peace talks.

There are old rivalries among Naga tribes.

Kohima is the centre of the Angamis, Zapuphizo's tribe. His family lived there. When Michael Scott came to Kohima, Zapuphizo's nieces took over the responsibility of looking after him and keeping his contacts with Naga leaders. The visits of the other Naga tribal leaders to him were curtailed and soon ceased.

From the camp of the Underground Nagas in Chidema, different voices were heard during the peace talks. Kaito, whose

guerilla attacks on Indian forces had taken a toll was saying that when Zapuphizo was staying comfortably in London, Nagas back home were protecting Naga sovereignty at the cost of their lives. Why should he be entrusted with the responsibility of peace negotiations with India? Kaito gave up his office of Minister for Defence in the government of the Underground. He later lived in Kohima as a private citizen. One day a member of the Underground from Khonoma village shot him dead in Kohima Bazaar.

In Delhi talks, the Naga delegation was led by Kaito's brother, "prime minister" Kughato Sukhai. He used to tell me, "you do not know what a difficult person Zapuphizo is and how very self-centered! If the task of Delhi negotiations with India is given to him, the first thing he would do would be to negate all that has been achieved and would want the process to start all over again! I personally think that after some progress is made with the Government of India in the talks, then Zapuphizo could be asked to come. At the moment he would scrap everything and take us back to the start."

Among the Nagas, the Aos are a large tribe and have a good number of educated persons. Their leader, the elderly Imkogmeren, had, by leaving his flourishing trading business and joining the Underground, had shown great selflessness. He was a friend of Zapuphizo and Vice-President of the Naga National Council. (Till his death in 1990 Zapuphizo held the position of President.) Mr. Imkongmeren also thought that the talks should be conducted under the leadership of Zapuphizo. He felt that the Naga leaders going to Delhi should only have a one-point agenda: tell the government of India that the talks should be held with Zapuphizo.

Reverend Michael Scott was also saying the same thing.

During his three year stay in Nagaland, Reverend Scott travelled from village to village, made enquiries, and compiled a list of all those killed, maimed, arrested and tortured by the Indian army and asked for investigations into the circumstances in which all this happened. Perhaps his list was not a hundred percent correct. An inquiry would expose wanton killings.

The administration was shaken to the core by Reverend Scott's charge. "What right does a foreigner have to meddle in our internal affairs and demand investigation?" asked Indian authorities.

Michael Scott sent his list of those killed and wounded first to the President of India. Even the President, the Prime Minister and the Government did not know that so many Naga villagers, whom they called 'their own people', had been killed. When the list was given out, the government became indignant. It said that it was not right for Michael Scott to stay on in India. If he continued, one did not know how much more 'dirt' he would dig and put on display!

Chronically ill, having recently undergone an abdominal operation, Reverend Michael Scott was in the Welsh Mission hospital at Shillong, when externment orders were served on him. Under police escort he was taken from the hospital to Gauhati, flown to Bombay and then put on a plane to London, on May 3, 1966.

Many of those in the know of things said that if Jaya Prakashji had not resigned from the Peace Mission, thereby making it weak, the government would not have had the courage to expel Michael Scott. Jaya Prakash-ji did not condemn the expulsion.

By taking Jaya Prakashji to the Governor's House, the officials' game to wreck the Peace Mission had begun in earnest. The aim was to weaken or break the Peace Mission.

The same day, May 3, 1966, Bimla Prasad Chaliha too put in his resignation from the Peace Mission, and ended it. He did not like the government's forcible removal of Reverend Michael Scott from hospital and being sent out of the country. He thought it was neither right nor civilized. But he knew that as the last remaining leg of the Peace Mission tripod, he would not be able to accomplish anything.

The Nagas at that time were placing bombs in trains passing through Assam and had killed more than two hundred passengers. A fearful uproar broke out in Assam Assembly. Its members asked, "By staying on in the Peace Mission, was Chaliha providing the possibility to Nagas to kill innocent rail passengers in Assam?"

A wave of joy overwhelmed the ranks of central and state officials over the end of the Peace Mission. The Mission had assumed moral authority over them and had managed to curtail their and the Army's arbitrary behaviour. That had come to an end. The administration and army had regained their power to impose their will in Nagaland, after the dissolution of the Peace Mission.

Ignoring the traditions of their society, holding power with the support of the army and freely plundering Government coffers, Naga ministers and officers started to become rich overnight. One of them, to display his power, obtained an English wife!

The Peace Mission had been a referee between the government and the Naga Underground. By breaking up the Mission, the government of Nagaland and officials of Delhi and Kohima thought they had regained their right to arbitrary power.

The Peace Mission had also succeeded in imposing some restraint on Naga Underground.

In the beginning Indian officials thought that the talks with Nagas were a means of winning praise for themselves. By exploiting in Delhi the aura of peace-making that came to them, they aspired for higher positions. There were possibilities for one like Gundevia to become a Governor or an ambassador after retirement. Those below him were also in the contest. Two succeeded. Major M.L. Kampani who had come from the army and had been Deputy Commissioner of Kohima, on retirement, became Governor of the Andaman-Nicobar Islands. Murkot Ramunni from the Indian Air Force, also former head of Kohima district, became the Administrator of the Lakshdweep and Minicoy Islands in the Indian Ocean.

But Gundevia got nothing, except blame for failure of Naga talks.

Jaya Prakashji too, not seeing any possibility of reaping any benefit, distanced himself from the Peace Mission.

The Naga problem was old, complex and not easy to solve. India was entangled in its political complications for the first 20 years and then, for next 30, in fighting.

Inspired by Nagas, other indigenous peoples of the Northeast, the Mizos, Meiteis, Kukis, Boros, Paite, Baite, Garos and Assamese of the Brahmaputra valley as well, took to arms. A spate of armed conflicts broke out all over the region.

But from Delhi, to those at the helm there, it looked as if those conflicts were taking place in some distant land. Nobody in the ruling circles spared his or her full time and thought to finding solutions. Leaders and officials were eager to have their names associated with efforts to settle problems and reap fruits of success if achieved. But to come away from Delhi, stay in

Kohima or elsewhere in the region, carry on with efforts to seek solutions was not anyone's priority.

Before his death in 1964, Nehru seemed to have come to the conclusion that a minister from Delhi should be sent to have talks with the Nagas. But Gundevia asserted and got Nehru to agree to let him carry the preliminary talks.

As Indian Foreign Secretary, Gundevia had many tasks in Delhi. For Naga talks he had neither time nor ability.

Coming to Kohima for talks with the Nagas was like a holiday for him. It meant an air journey from Delhi to Dimapur, 70 mile travel from there in an Air Force plane or an Otter aircraft to Kohima, welcome by leaders and officials there, a stay at the Governor's House and nightly parties, with whisky, jokes and laughter. "Tell us", he would ask Nagaland officials, "What services Zapuphizo's nieces are providing Reverend Scott?" or, "is the new wife of general Kaito really beautiful?" or "What are the other beauties doing?", etc., etc. This kind of gaiety was not available in Delhi. Then, on the third or fourth day he would fly back to Delhi to his work there.

Only a foreigner, Reverend Michael Scott, stayed in Kohima to study and understand the situation in Nagaland, in spite of his illness. He travelled from village to village to collect information: how many villages were burnt during the fighting, how many died, put in jail and tortured in military camps, maimed or are still untraceable and missing? Collecting data, he prepared an account of what had happened in Naga areas. After falling very ill, he went to England for an abdominal operation, but on recovering, returned to Kohima in November 1965. When the need for a second stomach operation rose, he did not go back to England but had it done in Shillong, Assam.

Seeing his devotion, Delhi got worried.

Chapter 5

Talks Fail

The fist reason was that nobody from the Indian government was keen to fully commit to the task of finding a solution. For negotiations with the Nagas, Mr. Y.D. Gundevia and four other officers would come to Kohima from Delhi for a couple of days. In Delhi, they held important jobs for which they received salaries. There they wielded power. By staying out of Delhi for long periods they risked losing their importance. They wanted to obtain a solution to the difficult Naga problem while attending to their other tasks. The Naga problem was not a priority for them. Those from Delhi or elsewhere were in a hurry, unwilling to devote their entire time and attention to solve the problem.

Then they worked on the advice of their subordinates in Nagaland, who were their eyes and ears. These were the very persons who had failed to find a solution. The methods used by those coming from Delhi were the same that had been tried and failed. They wanted a solution in advance, with little debate or discussion. In June 1947 the Assam Governor, Sir Akbar Hydari, had concluded a nine-point agreement with the Naga National Council (NNC), for the Naga Hills District to remain in India for ten years, after which the Nagas were given the right to either extend that period or end it.

Then came the Delhi Agreement of December 25, 1957. It was to separate the Naga Hills District from Assam, join it with Tuensang Division of the North-East Frontier Agency (NEFA), then administered directly by the Union government through the Assam Governor, under Delhi's External Affairs Ministry. The bureaucrats in Delhi at that time believed the root of the Naga problem lay in the arrogant behaviour of the Assam administration. Delhi presumed, by separating Naga Hills from Assam and placing it directly under Delhi's Central administration would make the Nagas happy and they would end their struggle.

Propelled by this assumption, on December 25, 1957, the Naga Hills-Tuensang Area (NHTA), was created as a separate administrative unit, directly under Delhi. Except for government officials whose numbers and powers were increased, no Naga became happy.

Then came the 16-point agreement of July 26, 1960, between the Naga Peoples Convention and the Indian government, which created the 16th state of India, bearing the English name, 'Nagaland'. That too was an assumption that an English name and a separate state would make the Nagas happy and stop them fighting. That agreement too was not acceptable to many Nagas. It was signed by some Nagas under the leadership of a retired medical doctor, Imkongliba, who was later assassinated near his house in Mokokchung town. Ignoring Naga opposition, President Radhakrishnan, in December, 1963, came from Delhi and inaugurated the new Nagaland state in Kohima.

This agreement put the state government in control of some Nagas who had no connection with the struggle.

In these agreements solutions were decided upon without much consultation with the Naga people. The Government

seemed to argue: "All right, you don't want to stay with Assam? That is fine. Delhi will separate you from Assam." Then Delhi decided to give them a separate state with an English name, which it thought they might like. But why? Who were those who wanted a state with an English name? Some Naga government employees were accepted as spokesmen of the Naga people by Delhi and what they said was accepted as the genuine demand of the Nagas. But those were not the real Naga demands. Those were arguments acceptable to Delhi officials. Delhi was arrogant. Its leaders and officials believed they were the Government and considered Naga fighters as illiterate riff-raff living in forests.

Then, on November 2, 1975, an Agreement was signed in Shillong between the Governor, on behalf of the Government of India, and a faction of the Naga Underground. The Naga leader, Mr. Zapuphizo's brother, Mr. Keviyallei, and four other Nagas signed it and declared that they had accepted the Constitution of India. The signatory on the Indian side was the Assam Governor, Mr. Ladli Prasad Singh. The Agreement said that the Underground Nagas would bring over and store their weapons in Chidema Peace Camp and some other designated places.

For twenty years Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru had unsuccessfully tried to make Nagas accept to remain in the Indian Union. What Mr. Nehru could not accomplish, the Governor (Rajyapal) did it, on paper.

These were not solutions acceptable to those Nagas who were fighting. The militants then brought more arms, this time from China, and stepped up the fight. As a result, in September 1977, another ceasefire had to be signed with Naga fighters.

Details of talks during the first ceasefire of September 6, 1964, lasting four years, were not made public. The Indian Army did not like the talks. As soon as the Nagas put up a camp for peace talks in Chidema village, Indian Air Force planes began flying over it, to show that they could destroy it if they wanted.

At the talks on 12 October 1964 at Chidema, the Nagas put up three demands: concentration camps be closed down, political prisoners released and Indian army withdrawn from Nagaland. While discussion on these demands was going on, Mr. Jaya Prakash Narayan, a Peace Mission member, put forward a proposal that both sides should declare not to use force to settle the problem. Mr. Jassie Hurrey, leader of Naga delegation, immediately said he was ready to stop fighting and lay down arms. The Indian side said it was ready to make a declaration against the use of force, but then every government needed an army as part of its set up and India would not withdraw it from Nagaland.

Jassie Hurrey was prepared to show by action and deed his willingness to give up the use of force. He said he was willing to bring over his entire store of weapons and hand it over to the Peace Mission in Chidema. He hoped that after that the Indian government would not need to station its army in Nagaland. The problem would be solved peacefully. To maintain law and order there were enough police forces in the area. India said in reply that the question of not resorting to arms was one to be decided by traditional organizations of the Naga tribes and not by the Naga delegation. The Indian delegation was trying to evade the issue of making Naga territory an area of peace. It was negotiating with a Naga delegation and not with village or tribal organizations.

To withdraw military from the area and induce the Nagas to lay down arms, Mr. Chaliha, another Peace Mission Member, drew up a five-point plan. The points were: 1. The Indian government disclose by November 15, 1964, the number of troops it had deployed in the Naga area and its plans to withdraw them; 2. The Naga Federal Government (Underground) too, by the same date, prepare a list of arms it possessed and a plan to hand them over to the Peace Mission; 3. Both parties start implementing the plan by December 31, 1964; 4. A trust made of members from both sides and the Peace Mission be set up to receive arms from the Nagas; 5. This process of disarmament be made an international model.

On November 10, Mr. Gundevia declared that on no account would he give the figure of Indian troops stationed in Nagaland. If the Nagas surrendered their arms and explosives to the Peace Mission and the Indian government was convinced that all arms had been handed over, it could then think of withdrawing its army. The troops that would be left in Nagaland would be for guarding the international border, not to be used in Naga villages.

Immediately thereafter the Indian delegation sent to the Peace Mission a whole lot of accusations against the Underground, charging it with forcible collections of funds from villages and fresh recruitments of fighters. It started the process of scuttling plans for disarmament.

On November 16, 1964, the Underground sent a letter to the Peace Mission, saying the Nagas' right to self-determination was separate from that of the Indian peoples' right to it. If the Indian people decided to form a republic it did not mean that the Nagas too had decided to join it. The Nagas had declared

their independence before India. The Indian army had not conquered them. What the Nagas wanted from India was what the Indians had wanted from the British.

Further, the letter demanded that the Indian delegation be shown the list which Reverend Michael Scott of Peace Mission had painstakingly compiled, travelling from village to village, of atrocities committed by the Indian army. In addition, the letter demanded that the Naga issue be taken to the International Court of Justice to decide whether the Nagas had the right to determine their future.

Reverend Michael Scott proposed that the ceasefire period should be set for two years at a time and not for a few months. A coalition government be set up in the Naga area, in which the Underground too could take part.

No decision was taken on Rev. Scott's proposals, which were not even discussed.

Then the Peace Mission put forward its important proposal of December 20, 1964. It said that like all other peoples, Nagas too had the right to determine their own future. But it added that the Nagas should exercise that right in favour of remaining in the Indian Union. The two were contradictory. The mission had asked the Nagas, in the interest of peace and a solution of the problem, to decide in favour of remaining in India.

Mr. Gundevia came down hard on the proposal. He said that the Indian government did not agree with the Peace Mission's proposal that the Nagas had the right to self determination. But it was for the second proposal, that the Nagas should decide in favour of staying in the Indian Union.

Then the Governor, Mr. Vishnu Sahay, addressing the Nagaland State Assembly, issued an ultimatum, saying the

Nagas were being given the last chance to agree to be a part of the Indian Union by the Peace Mission proposal.

The Underground Nagas thereafter convened their Assembly to debate the proposals of the Peace Mission and ask for clarifications. This session began on March 25, 1965, at Wokha. All three members of the Peace Mission were invited. They were asked to state if Nagaland was under the control of Indian army or not? Did not the Nagaland Security Act empower the army to arrest and hold Nagas in detention for any length of time? Did the army not have powers to arrest, interrogate and torture, and if anyone died under torture, bury him or her wherever it wished and deny that the person was ever in its custody?

Rev. Michael Scott admitted that Nagaland was being governed by the Indian army lawlessly. Mr. Chaliha fell ill during the session and had to be taken to Shillong.

Later the Indian delegation said that the charges against its army were not true. The Indian army was of course empowered to carry out searches and make arrests without warrant. But after questioning (which often meant torture) the accused were handed over to civil authorities (provided he or she was alive!).

In nine sessions of peace talks with Mr. Gundevia, there was hardly any in which the Nagas did not ask the Indian delegation what kind of relations India wanted to have with them? Ignoring the question, Mr. Gundevia kept insisting that the Nagas should first consent to be a part of the Indian Union. Place the cart before the horse, he was telling them.

If India had then proposed that Delhi would retain defense, foreign affairs, currency, and communications, and

give control of other subjects to Nagas to administer according to their traditions, needs and social practices, the talks could have made progress. But Delhi wanted surrender first, before accepting Naga traditional rights.

After a year and a half of talks, it became clear that Mr. Gundevia was incapable of finding a way of moving forward towards solving the problem. Besides other things, he was abrupt of manner. It was then felt necessary that the talks be held at a political level and not at an official one. All the three members of the Peace Mission were in Mokokchung during the last round of talks with Mr. Gundevia.

Mr. Chaliha called me and said: Let us go to Delhi and tell Prime Minister Shastriji that the Naga talks should be led by a minister from Delhi and not by Mr. Gundevia.

Before taking a helicopter to Shillong, Mr. Chaliha asked me: "Do you have the airfare for going to Delhi?" I said I would borrow. Chaliha then asked, "Isn't Gundevia giving you your expenses?" When I told him that Gundevia was not, he was very upset, and said, "Whenever I go to Delhi (as chief minister of Assam he went there often on work) Shastriji always asked me, "Is Chandola all right?" And each time I assure him that you are. "Neither I nor Shastriji ever suspected that Mr. Gundevia has not been paying you your expenses, as promised."

Pained, he said, "You should have told me about it earlier!"

Before Indira Gandhi became the Prime Minister, there were three officials who were running Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri's government. One was the Cabinet Secretary, Mr. Dharma Vira. Witnessing the ineptitude of Mr. Gundevia and the need to change the leadership of the Indian delegation,

Jaya Prakash Narayan of the Peace Mission thought of bringing Mr. Dharma Vira as leader of the Indian delegation. Being the seniormost civil servant in India, Mr. Dharma Vira was powerful at the Centre. On Mr. Narayan's recommendation, he had come to Kohima to hold talks with Nagas.

Mr. Narayan brought Dharma Vira to Kohima in November 1965, and tried to persuade the Underground to accept him as the leader of the Indian delegation. He said Dharma Vira was of a rank higher than Mr. Gundevia. He was the seniormost officer of the Union Government, and in protocol his rank was that of a Deputy Minister. Talking with him would mean upgrading the peace negotiations. He knew Mr. Dharma Vira personally, he said, and vouched for his ability.

The Underground asked Mr. Narayan: "Is Mr. Dharma Vira a bureaucrat, like Mr. Gundevia, or not? If he is, we would not want the talk with another bureaucrat, but have talks at a political level. A leader would understand our political aspirations. Bureaucrats did not think in political terms, nor were they capable of taking political decisions."

Mr. Dharma Vira was not accepted and returned to Delhi.

Before his death in May 1964, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru had expressed his willingness to talk with the Nagas himself. Delhi bureaucracy however persuaded him to let it first try to find out what was in the mind of the Nagas.

Chapter 6

Poor Border Administration

The British had found it difficult to occupy Naga areas and managing them was also not easy. After independence in 1947 India found administering them more difficult because a new element of nationalism had taken root in the people's mind. Nagas in neighbouring Myanmar (Burma) were administered by the Burmese government. Nagas of both Burma and India are neither acquainted with the international border nor recognize it. This boundary is on paper only; on maps, not on the ground. If in Mon or Tuensang districts of India this boundary was placed on the ground, it would divide homes. In a house, a room would lie in India while other rooms would be in Myanmar. In 1970s when the pressure of the Indian army was high on militants, many Indian Nagas slipped into Myanmar and set up camps there.

Nagas are spread over these two countries. In India they are scattered in different states. Until 1957 Naga Hill District was part of Assam state. The next-door Naga region, Tuensang, which the British called 'un-administered area' was, in 1950, placed in the North-East Frontier Agency of India, administered by Delhi's External Affairs Ministry.

In Manipur Naga areas are under the control of the Meitei

people of the Imphal valley. Nagas live in districts of Ukhrul, Mao, Tamenglong, Senapati and Chandel of Manipur.

Some Naga areas have a population of Kukis and Meiteis people also. Nagas also live in Arunachal, Assam, Manipur and Tripura. In Arunachal Pradesh, Nagas live in Changlang and Tirap districts.

Life for Nagas in Myanmar is difficult. For essentials like salt and iron they sometimes come to markets of Nagaland and Assam in India. Some good schools have come up in Nagaland and a few well-to-do Nagas of Myanmar send their children there.

People living along that border identify themselves with the name of their tribes and not by their citizenship of Myanmar or India. If asked, they say, 'we are Khimnugan, Pochuri, Imchungad, Sangtam, Konyak, Tangsha', and so on. They may not even say they are Nagas.

Leaders of India had neither any contact with these tribes nor experience of dealing with them. When the British rule ended, these tribes became parts of Burma and India. In their areas their way of life remained undisturbed.

Right up to the time they left, the British kept searching for ways of administering the Nagas. For the British they were a people living in a far corner of their empire, which did not bring benefit. They were small in number. But in Burma, the British found oil reserves. Setting up the Burma Oil Company there, they began earning good profits from it. In forests they found valuable teak trees over a hundred years old and hundred feet tall. In fields around rice grew plentifully, which was not only enough for the local population but also fed some neighbours.

In India there were Hindus and Muslims, in Burma mostly Buddhists. But in hills in between there were these people who

did not know Allah, Hindu gods and goddesses or the Buddha. They grew their food, cotton for cloth and made their own implements and weapons. They did not need anything from anyone. These were animist Nagas. Christianity was being introduced to them by missionaries from the United States.

How did they run their society? Why did they attack villages to take heads, to offer to earth-deities and decorate their newly-built homes? Why did they keep skulls in community dwellings of young men?

In their expansion of Empire, the British entered the Naga areas with their military might and established themselves as masters. They took a century to establish their administration, by setting up several armed police posts. In 1867, one night, the Nagas attacked one post, Galati, and took away some heads. Such attacks took place in other places as well.

The British administration wanted to know why such attacks occurred? Some of its officials thought that since tea estates were being set up in Assam valley, next to Naga areas, the Nagas feared that they might also lose their lands to the estates. The movement of British survey teams made them apprehensive about their land being taken away. Nagas were in the habit of taking their spears with them when they went to markets in Assam. That was stopped.

For these and other reasons, between 1854 and 1865, Nagas of Angami tribe carried out 19 attacks on British police posts and settlements, in which 232 people were killed, wounded or taken away. In the next decade their victims numbered 334.

The British in retaliation decided to burn and reduce to ashes villages they suspected of attacks. It did not matter how many Nagas were killed. Along with their houses of thatch and bamboo, their granaries and standing crops were also set on

fire. This was punishment. In 1866, the village of Rajaphema was not only reduced to ashes, its inhabitants were told that if they wanted to stay alive they better forget the idea of returning to the village. Their fields with ripe, standing crops were burnt and made barren. Money and valuables were taken away and the people were made to do forced labour.

In 1880 the same was done to Khonoma village. Their centuries' old terraced fields, known in the region for their beauty and crops, were destroyed. No effort was spared to make Naga life difficult. After destroying their support, the people were driven into forests, to wander there like wild animals. Starvation and cold killed half the people of the brave, hard-working Khonoma village.

India became the successor to this cruel policy of the British. In 1950 when villagers of Fom and Chang Naga tribes burnt down a village in Urangkong to settle a dispute, an Indian Deputy Commissioner of the Naga Hills reached there with armed soldiers and burnt down some Fom and Chang villages in punishment.

Stories of such punishments are legion.

One year before Indian independence, in 1946, when Jawaharlal Nehru was the Congress President, he said, "The whole of the Naga region should be under the indigenous people there and should be ruled and developed with their help." Like the British, he wanted to put an end to head-hunting and raids on enemy villages.

After independence, following Mr. Nehru's unsuccessful journey to Kohima in 1953, the Naga National Council, the only organization of the Nagas, was declared illegal and its workers were jailed.

In 1954, Delhi set up a new, high-profile service to administer its northeast border regions. Statuswise it was equal to the Indian Administrative Service (IAS), the highest in the land, and was christened Indian Frontier Administration Service (IFAS). Its personnel were not recruited through competitive examinations, like the IAS. They were taken from military and police services.

In 1957, Naga Hills-Tuensang Area (NHTA), a new administrative unit was created and placed under the control of Delhi's External Affairs Ministry. Its first head or Commissioner was Colonel Prannath Luthra, from the army. By then, because of the breakout of an armed conflict in 1956, a full division of the Indian army was stationed at Jakhama, ten kilometers from Kohima. It had 10,000 soldiers and was called the Eighth Mountain Division. The Divisional Commander was a Major General, and below him were three Brigadiers.

The chief civilian administrator and district heads were officers recruited from the armed services, from ranks below those of Commander or Major General and Brigadiers. The civilian officers, Commissioner and district heads, had overall authority in their areas but they addressed the division and brigade commanders as "Sir," because of their higher ranks. The army was authorized to conduct searches and make arrests on its own. It was however expected to hand over the arrested to civilian administration. But it hardly ever did that, or informed the Commissioner, the Deputy Commissioners or Magistrates of arrests and detention. Army officers had the upper hand and were beyond the control of civilian officers who were supposed to have higher powers. The army could arrest anyone, interrogate, torture and detain for days without

informing the civilian authorities, which it was supposed to do.

Some innocent Nagas got killed in army camps. A Brigadier recruited soldiers from families of Indian cobblers and barbers. They were brutal in dealing with Naga detainees. For them it was no big deal to pull out nails and cut off skin of those they interrogated. Villagers brought to army camps were asked where their sons, brothers and relatives were hiding on joining the underground? If they did not reveal, they were tortured.

In Naga villages stories of such tortures and wanton cruelty were common.

A small example: In 1957, the Additional Deputy Commissioner of Phek, in Kohima district, was Mr. Sono Lovraj. He had been an officer of the Uttar Pradesh police before being recruited to the Frontier Service (IFAS) and was posted to Naga Hills. Once, on his way to Kohima, he stopped at an army camp at Chajuba village for his midday meal. On his way in, he saw in an army shed a Naga, whose hands and feet were bound, suspended upside down from the ceiling and surrounded by troops who were questioning him.

"Why was he being treated like that?" he asked the soldiers.

"Some questions have to be asked of him", they replied.

He could not tell the camp commandant there that he was the magistrate of the area, that anyone after arrest had to be handed over to his custody. He could not say, "I give orders that this man be taken down and then questioned". The law was that the army could make arrests but it had to hand over the arrested to civil authorities within 24 hours.

The civil administration never really knew how many people the army arrested, detained and tortured.

In villages, even today, people ask visitors with hope about the whereabouts of their sons, husbands or brothers arrested by the army and taken away years ago to unknown destinations. Decades later, they are still hopeful of finding them alive! They have visited jails as far away as in Rajasthan and submitted petitions to know the whereabouts of their relations taken away, but to no avail.

Then there are stories of rape.

Officers recruited for administrative work in frontier areas were captains or majors in the army. Some of them were persons who had lost hope of promotion in the armed forces. One such officer was a Flight Lieutenant in the Indian Air Force. He had studied up to Senior Cambridge or Class XII level. For IAS and other central services, a Bachelor's degree was essential. He came to this Frontier Service as an assistant political officer and in a few years got promoted as political officer. He then became a Deputy Commissioner and later an Additional Secretary to the Government of India in Delhi. The new service opened good possibilities.

Afterwards, when questions began being asked about the usefulness of the IFAS, it was wound up and all its officers were taken in the IAS. One who had been a Major in the army, became a Lieutenant Governor. The Frontier Service certainly showered good luck and good fortune on some of its members!

Some came to it for quick promotion, others for making money.

One of them was Mr. Murkot Ramunni, of Kerala. He had served as a Wing Commander in the Indian Air Force. The first thing he did on coming to the Frontier Service was to set

one group of Nagas against another, to divide and weaken the Naga movement.

In 1957, I was sent by *The Times of India* as its Northeast correspondent, based in Shillong. The biggest story of that area was the armed struggle of the Nagas. Naga areas fell inside the Inner Line. One needed a permit to cross that line.

Once I managed to reach Kohima without a permit. There, a Naga friend of mine, Mr. Zopianga, whom we called Zop, was the Additional Deputy Commissioner of Kohima, and Mr. Ramunni was the Deputy Commissioner, or the head of the district. The moment we met, Mr. Ramunni asked, "Why are you staying at Zop's? Come over to my bungalow. I'll introduce you to some educated Nagas from whom you will get to know the true state of affairs here."

I wasn't prepared to leave my friend's house and go to his. But when I was away to a village one day, he sent for my things from Zope's house. Coming back, Zope's wife said an order had been issued that I was to stay at Mr. Ramunni's house.

That evening Mr. Ramunni invited two Nagas over to his house to talk to me. One was Mr. Jasokei Angami of Thevoma Khel of Khonoma village, from which the Naga leader, Mr. Zapuphizo came. Jasokei later became a Chief Minister of Nagaland. The other was Kenneth, a graduate, who wanted to join the Frontier Service. After joining he subsequently became the Chief Secretary of the State. Jasokei told me that he had gone underground to fight for Naga independence with Zapuphizo in 1956. A year later he left the company of militants and came to live in Kohima. Both were graduates and intelligent.

While they were talking to me in the course of the evening, Mr. Ramunni plied them with rum, bought from the army, and fried chicken. Mr. Jasokei told me that the Naga militants

fighting from jungles were an uneducated and stupid lot. Mr. Zapuphizo had enticed them with false promises of freedom. Mr. Jasokei who had lived with them for over a year, said he realized the Naga freedom struggle would never succeed. "We the educated know that our future lies with India. Separated from it, we shall have no identity. Realizing this, some of us left. In a few years all will leave and none remain underground."

While bidding goodbye and good night to them, Mr. Ramunni handed a bottle of rum to each as present.

Mr. Ramunni had brought me over to his house to make me understand that 'educated' Nagas believed the struggle of the separatists would be over soon. I might have paid more attention to the two and their views if they hadn't talked with the help of liquor. Mr. Ramunni was engaged in setting up a group of 'educated Nagas', to oppose the militants.

Returning to Shillong I did not write about that meeting. The reason was my respect for Jasokie. He was good lyricist and an excellent singer. I did not want to tarnish his image by repeating his words soaked in Mr. Ramunni's rum.

In 1957-58, when he was the Deputy Commissioner of Kohima, Ramunni placed thousands of Naga men, women, children, old and young, in concentration camps fenced with barbed-wire.

It was perhaps a British imperialist police officer, Mr. Reginald Thomson, I think, who started this system of concentration camps in Malaya, after the Second World War. During the Japanese occupation the people in Malaya, specially the Chinese, had fought the Japanese invaders in a guerilla war. The Chinese were fighting Japanese imperialism everywhere.

After Japan was defeated, the Malayan guerillas began fighting the British who returned to the colony. Thomson decided to place the people of Chinese origin in concentration camps, ringed with barbed wire. Closed inside, the Chinese could not give food, shelter or information to guerillas fighting outside. Isolated, the guerillas were then easy to defeat.

Mao Zedong had said guerillas were like fish and the people water. Safe in their natural element, the 'fish' moved about freely and carried out attacks wherever it wanted. Thomson thought that if the 'water' was drained, the 'fish' would die. It was to accomplish this that he began driving the Chinese from their homes and putting them in barbed wire concentration camps, making it difficult for them to help guerillas.

Some official in Delhi read this tactic adopted in Malaya and wondered why not apply it in Naga Hills also?

This decision was most probably taken by officers of the Intelligence Bureau and the Army. But the order to drive Nagas out of their homes and into concentration camps came from the Deputy Commissioner, Mr. Ramunni.

In camps Nagas began dying of starvation and disease. Fields and agriculture were neglected. Empty Naga houses were robbed. Water was indeed drained, but the fish did not die. The detained villagers raised a fearful cry from behind the barbedwire. After some time the camps had to be closed and survivors allowed to return home. Even British imperialists, who had carried out a military campaign in Naga country from 1832 to 1880 to conquer and had killed hundreds, did not have the blood of so many women, children and the old on their hands. The Nagas claimed that Kifrey Camp had 8,032 prisoners. Seityus Camp: 8,000, Ungma Camp: 7,200, Agunato Camp: 7,000, Lumami Camp: 6,000, Suruhoto Camp: 5,800.

Isak Swu, the Foreign Secretary of the Naga Underground Federal Government, (now Chairman of the National Socialist Council of Nagalim, and the President of the Naga Underground government), whose companion, Th. Muiva, with whom the Indian government is at present engaged in peace talks, provided some figures in September 1964. He said until December 1960 the Indian army and administration had burnt down 2,203 houses in 36 Naga villages and put 11,207 people behind barbed wire in concentration camps.

In July-August 1957 alone 36 people had died.

It was alleged that until September 20, 1960, in the Sema Naga area alone, 34,244 people had died of starvation, disease and deprivation.

When these figures were given to the leader of the Indian government delegation, Mr. Y.D. Gundevia, in 1964, he said they were 'wrong'. But he never provided the 'right' figures. Mr. Gundevia was India's Foreign Secretary and the centrally-administered Naga Hills-Tuensang Area was directly under his Ministry. He should have known the number.

The government hasn't even said how many members of the Army and security forces had died fighting in Nagaland.

In his book, '*My Years with Nehru*', the Director of the Indian Intelligence Bureau, B.N. Malik, writes: "A plan on the lines of Malaya was drawn up to isolate the rebels from the people, under which people of several villages were put in concentration camps under army control. The thinking was that by isolating the rebels from the people they would lose their support base and would be finished."

Three-fourth of the Naga area is forested. It has deer and other game animals, roots, vegetables and fruits. This bounty of nature makes it possible for people to stay alive in forests.

In Malaya there were two communities, the Malay and the Chinese. The two could be separated, for their food habits, thinking, work, social set-up and habitations were different. During the Second World War the Chinese were at the forefront of fighting colonialists of Britain and Japan. They were mostly workers in tin mines and rubber plantations of Malaya. The Malays were farmers. When the British began herding the Chinese into camps, the Malay population did not oppose. But in the Naga area only Nags lived. When their members were being put in camps the entire population rebelled.

Members of the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) are given a full year's training in Mussoorie in administration. In the army the emphasis is on learning ways of warfare. Those who had received training in fighting, were sent to the vast tribal areas of the Northeast (now six states of Arunachal, Nagaland, Manipur, Tripura, Meghalaya and Mizoram) as administrators. They were unfamiliar with the indigenous people and their ways of life. Gaining familiarity takes time, which was in short supply with the new rulers. All they wanted was to exercise power and authority.

What ties did these officers build with the people of the region? In the 1962 border war with China some officials ran away from their posts. One of them was a Naga who was honoured with a Padmashree Award. While fleeing, he took truck loads of government building material from his posting place to Shillong to build a house for himself.

During the Japanese invasion of 1944, the British authorities had advised their Deputy Commissioner of Naga Hills, Charles Pawsie, to leave the beleaguered town of Kohima and come away to the safety of Nawgong or Shillong. The Japanese had taken over nearly the whole of Kohima and were fighting around

the bungalow of the Deputy Commissioner. Charles Pawsie was not willing to leave his post. Digging in with soldiers he remained there until the Japanese were dislodged and driven out of his district.

For not deserting his post, the British Government awarded him Knighthood. The Deputy Commissioner's staying on in his bungalow became an important historical event of the Second World War. Today, below the entire slope of the Deputy Commissioner's bungalow is a vast cemetery, in which lie buried hundreds of British soldiers killed there. Names of dead Indian soldiers are engraved on a large marble slab in the cemetery. On a rock at its entrance is written in big golden letters, "In memory of those who sacrificed their today for your tomorrow."

The new Frontier Service of India, instead of establishing a dialogue with Naga militants, stepped up their offensive against them in general.

Today, after 53 years, India is talking with leaders of the militants.

In Naga villages, thefts, burglaries and other petty crimes were unknown. Therefore, unlike in other parts of the country, these were not the common problems of administration there. What the new service and the army had to do was to find the hiding places of the Underground and capture its members. But what the IFAS administrators were told was that the Nagas were backward, illiterate, stupid and violent. Their task was to make a few surrender and win them over by offering them money, jobs or other inducements, then set them up as a group, to proclaim that they had returned home because they saw no future in fighting India. They did not wish to be separated from

India. They had been misled into becoming members of the Underground and on realizing their mistake had come back.

It was true that leaving aside the topmost leaders, some militants, for personal and family reasons returned. But at the same time others joined the guerrillas. Later, with government help, a political party of returnees and others, the Naga National Organization (NNO), was created, on the lines of the Naga National Council (NNC). This party fought the elections of 1964, and become the new state's ruling force.

This new party the administration helped to create, divided the Naga society into two: One that did not recognize the Indian government, and the other which was pro-government, pro-Delhi. The army and the administration gave full backing to the pro elements. When the army raided villages, arrested people, beat them up or misbehaved with women, statements were issued by pro-government Nagas that the stories of atrocities were false and nothing but propaganda by Indian enemies. If the bodies of the dead were discovered, they said such things happened when there was fighting. Whenever questions were raised, the Prime Minister, Mr. Jawaharlal Nehru, provided one answer or another. When the army began burning down villages in Naga Hills and the centrally-administered territory of Tuensang, three members of Indian Parliament (Lok Sabha), Mr. K. Basu, Mr. H.V. Kamath and Mr. Rishang Kishing (a Manipuar Naga), said sending army to Naga areas was wrong.

Mr. Nehru's long statement in reply to this debate, made on 23 August, 1956, is interesting. The Prime Minister justified army activities on the basis of reports of officials from there. The justification was, "if others (Naga militants) were committing

murders, shall we send them our good wishes? The people there were asking for our help. We too had to shoot when shot at."

It is worthwhile to read that ten-page statement of Mr. Nehru. Mr. Nehru related the incident that took place in Achingmori, Tuensang, in October 1953. Tuensang, was administered directly by the External Affairs Ministry, headed by Mr. Nehru himself. Mr. Nehru said, "When an officer of the Indian army with troops was setting up a camp there, he was suddenly attacked. Soldiers were putting up tents and the officer was having tea. Seventy people were killed, of whom 40 were porters and 30 soldiers. Delhi then had to send more troops. The people there were asking Delhi for help to protect themselves. The army was in an angry mood. It burnt villages." Similar incidents took place in Tuensang in 1955. Mr. Nehru said, "When fighting was going on in centrally-administered Tuensang, the Naga Hills District of Assam was quiet. Mr. Zapuphizo came to meet the Governor of Assam and its Chief Minister, and promised he would keep his movement non-violent. But the truth was that all the time he was engaged in making violent preparations."

"Zapuphizo and some of his companions came twice to Delhi to meet me," Mr. Nehru said. Mr. Basu spoke of the brutal behaviour of the army. Mr. Kishing reported burning of villages and shooting of people. Nehru said army manoeuvres were taking place there. Everything that happened could not be said to be right. Mistakes were made, of which the killing of a retired, aged government doctor, Dr. Haralu, in Kohima was the most deplorable, Mr. Nehru said.

He added: "I do not wish to say that mistakes have not happened... it is true that villages have been burnt. According

to information with us some were burnt by the militants themselves. Mr. Jaipal Singh says that more troops and battalions should be sent there. But why are we sending them there? The reason is that we have to protect those who are being attacked. Naga rebels are dependent on support from people and villages. To collect money for their needs from villages, militants are threatening and harassing the people.

"In Tuensang Division, 100 village defence bodies have been set up. We have given them guns. When the rebels put pressure on the people to give them money and food, etc., these organizations or bodies resist them.

"There the fighting is among the Nagas themselves, and in that fighting some villages could well have been burnt. The number of burnt villages that Mr. Kishing has given may be right. But I say that most villages have been burnt by the rebels themselves.

"The houses are made of bamboo and thatch, which catch fire easily during exchange of fire. It is true that in the beginning our forces set fire to villages on suspicion that troublemakers were hiding there.

"When the army is engaged in the task of putting down disturbances, civil administration does naturally get curtailed.

"There is talk of sending a parliamentary commission there. But what will this Commission do? And where will it go? Wherever it goes, a battalion of security forces will have to accompany it. I hope a time will come when it will be possible for a parliamentary commission to go there."

This statement made it clear that the army had burnt villages. The government had supplied arms to some Nagas and tried to make them fight the militants. What was the crisis there

which the government called the 'internal fights of the Nagas'? To see and study it, members of Parliament could not go there because of the fighting. The government made mistakes, yet it found it necessary to send more force.

How many Naga villages were burnt? The government must know this. The people there also know. But who will now go there from village to village to record the number?

Chapter 7

Nehru Did Not Favour A Naga State

People believe that the government formulates its policies through its elected representatives. But this is a misconception. Ideas for policies come from bureaucracy. The leaders are mere masks.

No prime minister taller than Mr. Nehru has appeared in India. Bureaucrats used to put up a show of being in awe of him. But in fact they held the upper hand in the use of power. Their moves were silent and unseen.

Nehru and the Indian bureaucracy came from totally different backgrounds. Bureaucracy was created by the British rulers as a tool to administer colonial India. Bureaucrats were trained not to trust the Indian people. The Congress party of Mr. Nehru had fought against British rulers and their bureaucracy. On its part, bureaucracy abhorred Gandhi, Nehru and all those it had to suppress on behalf of the British rulers.

However, on August 15, 1947, when India became independent , this Anglophile bureaucracy and leaders who had fought the British, became one, to rule the people of the country. The departing British installed some leaders in power.

But the task of administration was left in the hands of the old bureaucracy.

Under the leadership of Gandhiji the Congress was a vast organization. Most of its workers were educated. They were fully capable of running the country's administration. But they were not given that task. It remained with the old bureaucracy, trained by the British and it ran the government as the British did.

Laws had been made by the British for their colonial needs, which remained in practice in free India. Some Indian leaders became rulers on independence. But the Congress and its political workers were not taken into running the country's administration.

Taking note of Nehru's opposition to creation of a new arrangement for the Nagas, officials in Naga territory incited some Nagas raise an outcry in Kohima, Shillong and even in Delhi to put an end to unrest and fighting in their areas. For that they suggested they needed the creation of a separate state of Nagaland, within India. Otherwise the fighting going on for more than two decades would not stop.

The Nagas asking for a separate state were puppets of government officials. Foremost among them was Mr. Shashimeren Aiyer, an officer of the Scheduled Castes and Tribes Commission of the Government of India, and later the Development Commissioner of Nagaland. Behind him stood other officials.

Mr. Shashimeren's effort was to break Naga unity.

Educated Nagas had earlier set up a social organization called the Naga Club. They changed its name to 'Naga National Council' (NNC) later. Before independence of India

this organization had become political and stood for Naga independence. The government thought it may be worthwhile to set up another Naga political organization which would support the government position of Nagas being a part of India and remaining in it. For that it encouraged and helped set up a body of retired government servants as well as those in service. Its members were a clever lot. They wanted to show the Naga people that whatever moves they made were for their good, to end strife and bring peace and prosperity.

Their approach towards Delhi was that if India wanted peace, it must accept their recommendations. They told Delhi that whatever demands they made were the need of the entire Naga society.

From their very first meeting, Mr. Nehru and Mr. Zapuphizo, the rebel Naga leader, did not get along. Mr. Nehru thought Mr. Zapuphizo was far too clever a person whose word could not be trusted. Let alone further consultations, even the ground for a dialogue could not be established between the two. They just differed.

They didn't have many meetings either. Mr. Nehru was not inclined to hear of an independent Naga state, which was the demand of Mr. Zapuphizo.

On 19 December 1951, a nine-member Naga delegation headed by Mr. Zapuphizo went to Silghat in Assam to meet Mr. Nehru. It wanted to convey to Mr. Nehru the outcome of a opinion poll it had carried out in Naga Hills from May 1951. In it, it was said, 99.9 percent of Nagas had, through their signatures and thumb impressions, expressed themselves in favour of an independent Naga state. This poll had been carried out by Mr. Zapuphizo in the Naga Hills District only,

and not in Tuensang Naga area. Only two questions were asked of Nagas: Do you wish to have your own independent state, or live in India? The Nagas had expressed the wish to live in their own free state.

Silghat used to be a point of crossing the mighty Brahmaputra river by boat. Now a bridge spans it there. Mr. Nehru and the Naga delegation talked riding a boat.

Mr. Zapuphizo's manner of talking was aggressive. He rained a barrage of questions on the person he was talking to, and did not give him or her the possibility of having a discussion. He showed Mr. Nehru the register which contained thousands of thumb impressions and signatures in favour of an independent Naga state. Nehru was dead set against another division of India.

"You agreed to accept that Hindus and Muslims, who had lived together for centuries, were different people and divided India on that basis. We Nagas have always been a separate people. Our food, way of life and thinking have always been different from yours. You don't even drink the water touched by us. We are a separate people and want to live separately", Mr. Zapuphizo argued.

He touched Nehru in the raw and hurt him where it hurt most. It was true that the partition of India was carried out by accepting that Hindus and Muslims were separate people. But to raise the matter again appeared like an accusation to Mr. Nehru. He went red on the face and declared: "Even if the skies fall and rivers run red with blood, as long as I am Prime Minister I shall never allow another division of India."

Mr. Nehru also stayed opposed to the creation of a separate Naga state in India. It was against his wishes that in 1963 a

Naga state was formed. Nehru did not attend its inauguration. In the creation of a separate state the role of the bureaucracy in Naga Hills was most prominent.

For three years (1957-60), when questions were asked in Indian Parliament about the whereabouts of Mr. Zapuphizo, Delhi's reply was that the government had no information. Perhaps he was dead, it was said.

Then, in 1960, when news came of his suddenly appearing in London, confusion broke out in Delhi. Intelligence services were of pivotal importance to Indian bureaucracy. These knew that Mr. Zapuphizo had gone to Dacca in East Pakistan. But they did not know that he was trying to go to London and New York, to present before international organizations the issue of Naga independence, bring charges against India, and procure arms for Naga militants. Intelligence had no clue of Mr. Zapuphizo's moves or whereabouts.

Some officials then thought that by allowing the formation of a separate state named Nagaland, Mr. Zapuphizo's campaign of slander against India could be blunted. In Naga areas too, on getting statehood the people might feel happy.

Nehru himself was not convinced of this.

The problem was how to make a separate state demand within India look like the genuine desire of Nagas people themselves, before the government accepted it? The Naga National Council and its President and leader, Mr. Zapuphizo, were fighting for Naga independence. Bureaucrats who were incharge of Naga areas had to create a leadership which would say that the Nagas wanted to stay in India, but in a state of their own. That they did not wish to go on with their traditional tribal administrative system, but wanted to create a modern state.

To create this demand, Indian bureaucrats made use of some Nagas. These Nagas were unhappy with the leadership of Mr. Zapuphizo, for he was too self-willed and not given to listening to others. These others were for a peaceful solution and against violence. Some, who in 1956 had gone underground to escape mass arrests by the Assam Government wanted to return home and resume their former peaceful life. Among them was Mr. Jasokei, a graduate, born in Mr. Zapuphizo's village of Khonoma and a politician. He had gone underground with Mr. Zapuphizo, but later left and came overground. Other colleagues of Mr. Zapuphizo who had left the Underground were T.N. (Thephulo) Angami (who later became a Chief Minister of Nagaland), Mr. Silei Haralu and some others, mostly educated persons. These became known as educated Nagas. As soon as they left Mr. Zapuphizo's company and came back to live overground peacefully, the bureaucracy got hold of them. A few more with education and degrees had come to Kohima in search of government jobs. They did not wish to go to jungles and join the guerrillas. Among them was Daniel Kent of the Lotha Nagas, who wanted to become a Government Circle Officer. Serving officials wooed them. With others they formed an unofficial body. Supervising this task was Wing Commander Murkot Ramunni, of Indian Frontier Administrative Service and Commissioner of Naga Hills—Tuensang Area. He was the Deputy Commissioner of Kohima in 1955, when he formed a small, unofficial set-up of educated Nagas. Many Underground Nagas were uneducated villagers, he argued, whom Mr. Zapuphizo had lured with a false promises of independence. Some educated Nagas knew this and were not with Mr. Zapuphizo. Mr. Ramunni introduced them to

senior army and civilian officers and said that they wanted to stay in India. They considered all talk of Naga independence foolish. In this group Nagas who had retired from government service were also included.

Efforts were made to set up a pro-India Naga organization, against Mr. Zapuphizo's Naga National Council. After the murder of Sakhrie, on orders of Mr. Zapuphizo, pro-India Naga liberals became active. To make them strong and effective it was thought Assam be sidelined and Naga Hills district which was part of that state, be taken out of it and brought under the direct rule of the Indian government. This proposal was to be placed before Delhi and it was suggested to Nagas that except independence, the Indian government was open to discuss all other matters with them.

In 1956, in the thick of fighting between Naga guerrillas and Indian security forces, members of a liberal Naga faction assembled in Kohima village. It was announced that they were giving up the demand for independence and were willing to talk with the Indian government on ways of their remaining a part of India.

In a letter this faction wrote to the Indian government, it said, "a dangerous situation is developing in Naga Hills. To avert further violence we want to alert the Naga people. Sometime earlier, for holding talks with Nagas the Indian government had set down the condition that leaders of Naga society should come out openly against murderers and anti-social elements, (supporters of Mr. Zapuphizo who were being called 'gangsters'). We Nagas have assembled here in Kohima for just this purpose. It was for this that our colleague, Sakarei, was murdered in cold blood. Without any prior understanding

with leaders in Delhi, we do not wish to present to the Naga people any plans or suggestions which may be unacceptable to the Indian government", the letter stated.

"We wish to send a representative team to Delhi, but without the knowledge of the Assam government, of which we are a part, for it will oppose our making direct contact with Delhi. We do not wish to be governed by Assam, nor do we wish to endorse the provisions of district autonomy given to us in the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution, which the Naga people have rejected. We want to be administered by the Central Government, not by Assam.

"Plunderers (workers of Mr. Zapuphizo's Naga National Council and fighters of the Underground Naga army) are at large in villages looting and bullying people. But the government is not giving us weapons for self defence.

"Desperados of Mr. Zapuphizo are forcibly obtaining donations from the people", the letter said.

These so-called pro-India liberals were, through this letter, asking the government for arms so that they could fight Zapuphizo's donation seeker militants.

"We want a kind of administration from the centre which puts the Nagas on par with other Indians, deals with them in a friendly spirit and realises that only Indian Nagas can lay the foundation of Nagaland."

Mr. Zapuphizo had talked of an attack on Kohima on March 29, 1956, and some people began leaving Kohima village in fear. The Deputy Commissioner was giving assurances to the people that battalions of the Indian army would soon be reaching Kohima to protect it. Nobody had confidence that the para-military Assam Rifles men in Kohima would be able to withstand the attacks of Naga militants and protect Kohima.

In April 1956, Major General R.K. Kochar was appointed General Commanding Officer of Naga Hills-Tuensang area. Immediately on arrival he issued a statement that the authorities would soon put an end to lawless acts of murder, forcible collection of money, robberies and burning of villages, committed by a handful of Nagas.

"Those of you who lay down your illegal weapons and keep them in storage with the police or the army will get full protection from the government," he announced.

The Indian army had launched a campaign of searches, arrests and burning villages. In fear the people began leaving villages and taking refuge in forests. The news of excesses were so numerous that General Kochar, on May 17, 1958, had to write to his brigade commanders, "many stories of army atrocities are coming in, saying innocent Nagas are being killed and their villages burnt. These incidents are not connected with rebels in any way. These stories are possibly being spread by mischief mongers. All Nagas are not a bad lot. Only a few are spreading lawlessness. We have come here to establish peace."

Very soon, the Naga society became fear-ridden as a result of arrests, beatings, burning of villages, tortures and deaths. The liberal Nagas then made an appeal for peace, in which they said that the government should proclaim an amnesty so that those who had run away in fear from their homes and villages could return and help in the task of restoring peace.

In their appeal the liberal Nagas asked for the immediate establishment of a Naga state, and wanted their people to tell what kind of future they wanted for themselves? Did they want a Naga state in which all Naga tribes could live peacefully together? On this appeal, made on May 16, 1956, were the

signatures of the following prominent Nagas: 1. T.N. Angami, 2. Jasokei, 3. Selei Haralu, 4. Vizol, 5. Magurto, 6. Thinenyu, and some others, of whom three, later, became chief ministers of the new state of Nagaland after its formation.

Two things became clear from this appeal:

1. A prospective Naga leadership opposed to the Naga National Council and Mr. Zapuphizo was beginning to take shape.
2. It set high stakes by solutions suggested by the bureaucracy, so as to ensure for itself a distinct place in Naga politics. The stakes consisted of making the Nagas dissociate themselves from the government of Assam by telling that the atrocities being committed were at the behest of the Assam government.

By seceding from Assam and coming under Central administration, these Nagas wanted to show that their politics was success oriented. By giving the status of a separate state to an area of merely 15,000 square kilometers and a population of less than five lakhs, the Centre was expected to make the Nagas happy so that they would stop supporting Mr. Zapuphizo's demand of independence. A state was a concrete piece of reality, while 'independence' was a dream. On getting statehood, a great deal of money for development would flow from the Centre in Delhi to Nagas. With it and the prospect of getting more, a good number of Nagas were expected to give up the hazardous life of fighting.

The thinking of some liberals, such as Vizol, was different. They thought that if violence ceased due to this appeal, three advantages would follow: 1. Atrocities would decline and

may eventually stop. 2. If the government declared a general amnesty, Mr. Zapuphizo and his underground colleagues might be induced to come out of hiding and stay in public. 3. Their coming into the open would open the way of finding an agreement between them and the government. Mr. Zapuphizo might get a chance to retract from his demand of total independence.

But liberals like Jasokei wanted to keep this path closed to Mr. Zapuphizo. Mr. Zapuphizo was a powerful leader and the liberals would not be able to hold their own against him. They said to the government that those who were guilty of major crimes, like murder, should be proceeded against in accordance with the law and not be included in the amnesty. That included Mr. Zapuphizo.

This was a major turning point in Naga politics. Some Nagas, in effect, were asking the Indian government, talk to them for they were in favour of staying in India. "We can bring home to other Nagas the advantages of staying in India and can convert them to our thinking. Let those who are in jungles, remain there. Stuck there they will be forgotten in time and their influence will die." The bureaucrats welcomed this turn openly. Official circles said Nagas involved in the murder of Sakhrei, and Shashimeren's brother, would not be included in the amnesty, and the government would not maintain contact with Mr. Zapuphizo and his followers.

The government's stand was that a separate state of the Nagas could not be created because it would need changes in the Indian Constitution. But to maintain peace it was possible to bring together the Naga Hills District of Assam and the centrally-administered Tuensang Division, and place them under Central rule.

While these talks were going on, Mr. Zapuphizo's forces mounted an attack on Kohima on June 11, 1956. On that day civilian buses under the protection of the Indian security forces, coming from Imphal (Manipur) were attacked and many passengers killed. Then, a platoon of the Assam Rifles going to Aradura on the Imphal road was fired upon and some of its members killed. On the second day, June 12, a platoon sent to guard the Imphal Road was fired upon. On June 13, Underground Naga fighters took full control of Kohima village. Liberal Nagas such as Jasokei, Silei Haralu and Thinonyu, had to take shelter in the Assam Rifles' camp or in the compound of Deputy Commissioner's house. A mortar bomb crashed through the ceiling of Jasokei house and burst inside. But by then Jasokei had left the house. Shots were fired at a police truck, 14 policemen in it were killed and rest injured. Gunshots, were heard all around Kohima. Kohima police station was attacked and seven people killed.

The fourth battalion of the Assam Rifles tried to re-open the Kohima-Manipur road. While it was advancing from Mao, on the border, towards Kohima, it encountered Naga fighters on the road near Khujama village. In a face to face fight, Naib-Subedar Amar Singh Gurung was killed. On the other side of Kohima hill, Indian troops had not succeeded in reaching the city and soldiers of the Assam Rifles were not able to re-open the road and had to return to Mao. Then a brigade of the Light Sikh Infantry reached Mao from Imphal. An Assam Rifles regiment, marching alongside it, reached Kohima, fighting Naga guerillas all the way along the 20 kilometers route. Throughout, in Viswema, Jakhama, Faisama and other villages, Naga fighters put up barricades on the road. Removing the barricades was quite a difficult task.

One hundred kilometers away, in Mokokchung district, almost all schools had to be closed down because of fighting and more than one thousand students had to go back to their villages for safety. Government hospitals, medical stores and post offices closed down. Kohima people ran away, leaving their homes. Daily and weekly bazaars (markets) in villages did not open. The administration was nowhere in sight.

A year ago, on July 30, 1955, in attacks on Aochanglami post, in far away Tuensang, where two battalions of the Assam Rifles were stationed, Naga fighters gained control, burnt the post down, and captured many armed police personnel. They took their weapons, consisting of 78 rifles, two light machineguns, one tommy gun and several pistols.

The Nagas sent a letter through the policemen they released to the Indian government, in which they said they had no desire to kill their Indian brethren. "We appeal to you to release (in like spirit) our Naga colleagues from your jails. It has never been our policy to treat our Indian brethren captured by us in any inhuman manner."

On August 26, 1956, the 'The Statesman' newspaper of Calcutta reported that Mr. Nehru wished to hold talks with Mr. Zapuphizo and his supporters. Reading this, leaders of the pro-India liberal Nagas became concerned. If such talks took place, they would have no role, they thought. Seeing the distress in Naga Hills, Mr. Nehru, it seemed to them, was thinking of holding talks with the militants. He had twice before held talks with Mr. Zapuphizo and his companions. But Mr. Zapuphizo made no further efforts to hold talks and let go the chance of finding an agreement.

All through 1956-57 fighting continued. In one encounter, the second in command of the Naga fighters, Yavamo Lotha,

whom the British had honoured with the Military Medal for outstanding bravery during the second world war, was killed. In Sema, Ao and Chakasang areas militants were better placed. Most militants were from the Sema tribe and their leader was Kaito. To Mr. Zapuphizo, who was of Angami tribe, Kaito's courage and valour seemed like a challenge to his own leadership and he did not wish to see Kaito as the chief of the Naga Army. But despite Mr. Zapuphizo's attitude, Kaito reached that position. By creating small, scattered bands of militants, he laid the foundation of a guerrilla force.

The Indian army, on coming to the Naga Hills, established posts and camps all over. To fight the Underground, the government set up a network of armed Naga Village Guards. Some of them went off with their weapons to the Underground.

When fighting started in June 1956, villagers faced immense difficulties. Many ran away to jungles to save their lives. To ease the situation somewhat, the Chief of the Eastern Command of the Indian army, Lieutenant General K.S. Thimayya, who, on October 26, 1956, met the Sema chief, Kughato Sukhai (who later became the Prime Minister of the Underground government, and who, in 1967-68, held talks with Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi in Delhi), and declared a ten-day ceasefire. General Thimayya said that during the coming ten days Nagas should surrender their weapons to the army or the police. But Nagas in meetings from October 30 to November 4, turned down this demand. The Indian army then resumed its searches, arrests, interrogation and torture.

To review the situation a Joint Secretary of the External Affairs Ministry, Mr. Trilokinath Kaul, came to Kohima in

August. After talks with Kohima officers and liberal Nagas, he came to the conclusion that the two Naga regions, Kohima district and the Tuensang Division, be joined and made into a centrally-administered territory, to make the Nagas believe that the Indian government was beginning to recognize Naga identity.

To find a solution, it was decided to establish another Naga organization in opposition to that of Mr. Zapuphizo's, and have talks with it. Whatever favours were to be granted to the Naga people were to be given to persons who were to form the new organization. To strengthen it, it was announced that the government would not hold talks with Mr. Zapuphizo's Naga National Council until it gave up its demand of Naga independence.

To make an emerging Naga faction strong, it was to be given the possibility of talking with Delhi. It hadn't yet been given a name. Among individuals who were going to Delhi for talks were Jasokei, retired Subedar Satso Angami, T.N. Angami and Silei Haralu. They made a long appeal to the Naga people before going to Delhi, in which they held Mr. Zapuphizo responsible for all political failure and appealed for an end to his leadership because they said he was extremely ego-centric, kept all power to himself and ran his outfit according to his whims. He had promised to secure help from other countries for Naga independence, but was unsuccessful, they said. His policies had resulted in internal strife and disunity among Nagas and brought about repression from India. Where was the money that the Nagas had collected and given him? He had been misleading the Nagas, the appeal said.

The meaning of independence, the appeal said, was to enable the Nagas live their life in accordance with their traditions. The

Indian government had also said safeguarding those traditions was the basis of its policy.

"We and the Indian government wanted to keep the Nagas under one administration. The concept of district autonomy contained in the Indian Constitution has already been rejected by the Nagas.

"We are going to Delhi," these leaders said, "carrying the prayers and good wishes of the Naga people and hope to bring back from there an agreement acceptable to the Naga National Council." (They considered themselves part of that organization until then.)

In Delhi they met Mr. Nehru on September 15, 1956. Before that, in February-March, three Naga leaders, Jassei Hurrey, Vizol and Magurtho, had visited Delhi to meet Mr. Nehru to prevent the danger of fighting breaking out in Naga Hills. But bureaucrats had not allowed the three to meet Mr. Nehru. When they returned home, Vizol and Magurtho were arrested and Jassie went underground. The later group which went to Delhi in September had the support of officials in Kohima.

Nehru met the delegation and told it that he had met Mr. Zapuphizo two or three times and each time he had come up with the demand of independence. He was always ready to meet Naga representatives, Nehru said, but they should give up violence and their talk of independence. These came in the way of finding a settlement.

Thereupon, Jasokei, who was the spokesman of the delegation, expressed his apprehension and wanted to know if Mr. Nehru sometime in the future planned to meet Mr. Zapuphizo and hold talks with him? Jasokei said that his

delegation represented the Naga people and had come to know the Indian government plans for a Naga settlement.

He also said that his group needed a platform which it could use to express and popularize its views.

Subedar Satso said he represented a large section of Nagas who were opposed to violence. Only 2.5 percent of Nagas had resorted to violence, he said. He wanted to know from the Prime Minister what offer he intended to make to the Nagas, so that on return home he could convey that to his people.

Without a platform of their own and assurances from the Prime Minister, they would not be able to bring their people to the path of peace. It was important to keep all Nagas united and under one administration.

Mr. T.N. Angami said that many armed Nagas would surrender if the government declared a general amnesty. But those charged with serious crimes need not be included in it, he added.

Mr. Nehru expressed sorrow over some of the incidents that had taken place in Naga Hills. He said that he was unhappy to know about the murder of Dr. Haralu, who was 80 and had retired from government service. He was killed by Indian soldiers while walking outside his house.

Mr. Nehru opposed the creation of a separate state of Nagaland, and said: States should be self-supporting in resources and should possess professional, educated administrative personnel. This was all the more important in border areas, he said. India had friendly relations with Burma and China. Yet, as long as Mr. Zapuphizo maintained a hostile attitude, he could not make any declaration about the future of the Nagas.

Nagas should make progress while keeping alive their

traditional practices and way of life, he said. Whatever changes he wished to make in the administration of Naga territory would be possible only after full consultation with the Naga people, not just by passing laws in Parliament.

Jasokie said he wanted an answer from the Prime Minister to his question of what India proposed to provide the Nagas. His people distrusted complex, long-winding arguments. Mr. Nehru said on independence of Nagas and their political future he could say nothing. What was the use of a new state which was shadowy and illusory?

Indirectly, these Nagas were making three demands on Delhi: 1. They be accepted as leaders and given a platform for talks with the government. They were the representatives of the Naga people, they said. (They should have asked for a platform from their own people, not from Delhi.) 2. They should be separated from the Assam and placed under Delhi's rule, and 3. India should never engage in talks with the Naga National Council of Mr. Zapuphizo.

In October 1956, when Lieutenant General Thimayya declared a ten-days' ceasefire, some villagers who had run away to jungles afraid of the Indian army's operations and arrests, came back. But afterwards some were rounded up and placed in concentration camps guarded by soldiers.

Due to the border tensions with China in the Northeast, and for controlling the increasing activities of Naga guerrillas, the Indian government thought of appointing a militaryman as Governor of Assam. A retired Indian Army Chief, General Shrinagesh, was made the Governor. He brought with him Richard Myer's book '*Shoot to Kill*'. In Shillong he presented it to his Advisor for Northeast, Mr. Nari Rustamjee, saying the book might provide ideas for handling the government

campaign in Naga country. The book related the story of the British government's success in separating village population from guerrillas by confining the Chinese population in barbedwire encampments. Officials were to consider, after reading it, if the same couldn't be done in Naga Hills?

All black laws of Assam and the rest of India were applied to Naga Hills. The first to come was the Naga Hills Disturbed Area Ordinance, then the Assam Maintenance of Public Order, and after that, with the coming of the army, the Indian Armed Forces' Special Powers Act, which allowed the army to enter villages, arrest and keep persons in detention, without a warrant. (Detention meant forcibly obtaining information through torture). Many died of torture.

Militants attacked army camps, military vehicles on roads, and soldiers on patrol, destroyed road bridges and forced Naga government employees, especially village headmen and interpreters, to quit their jobs. Some were abducted from their homes and it was said that a few were killed.

In November 1953, Nagas set up their own National High School in Kohima, and the following year in Mokokchung. Government schools were forced to close.

Naga Government employees faced great difficulties. On the one hand the militants declared them government agents, and on the other, government officials called them supporters of the Underground and punished them. People detested Indian administration, compared its atrocities with the peaceful life that had prevailed under the British rule and said that to live in India was to endanger one's life.

Laws had no meaning. Army's decision was the law. Army did not know who was a militant and who not. Unable to

differentiate, army treated all as suspects. If agents brought news that from such and such a village some youngmen had gone underground, parents of the boys and sometimes the whole village was brought for questioning: "Tell us where they are hiding, those brothers or sons of yours?" For obtaining that information, villagers were subjected to beatings and sometimes their houses and grain stores were burnt. People were forced to carry army supplies and equipment and clear jungles. Some jungles had to be cut down to ensure that militants did not hide in them.

Seeking deliverance from the woes afflicting their land, Naga elders called a convention of their people in Kohima. Because of curfew all over Naga hills, people had to appeal to the government to relax it so that their representatives could come to Kohima for the convention. Only the government or the army could lift the curfew. Officials began issuing guidelines for the convention. The Underground did not participate in it.

Representative of all Naga areas came to Kohima to deliberate on what should be done to save the people from the misery they were facing. Peace had to be established. The administration suggested that they should put forward three proposals: 1. The Nagas should come out of Assam administration. 2. They should be placed under one administration. 3. The Naga National Council and Mr. Zapuphizo should be kept out of peace efforts, to ensure that he does not hijack the political initiative of the emerging leadership.

India's Intelligence Bureau played a key role in guiding the convention's deliberations. Its chief, Mr. B.N. (Bholanath) Malik, through his countrywide network of operatives, used to

bring to the Prime Minister, Mr. Nehru, news of happenings in the country with speed. He was the eyes and ears of the Prime Minister. It was through his system that India's border confrontation with China in 1962 was viewed. In 1960s, Mr. Malik's own eyes and ears in the Northeast was the Joint Director of the Bureau, Mr. Sudhin Dutt, a Bengali born in Dhrubi district of Assam. He had passed the Imperial Police examination of the British and used to mock officers of the Indian Police Service, set up subsequently, with remarks like: What is this Indian Police Service (IPS)? "I piss", he would say!

The Naga Peoples Convention in Kohima began on 22 August, 1957. 1,760 representatives of the troubled Naga Society came from all over to participate in it. More than 2,000 others came as visitors. Every Naga tribe took part. Government-backed 'liberal' Nagas established their hold over the convention and tried to direct its proceedings. The assembly elected its Chairman a retired medical doctor from Mokokchung town, Dr. Imkongliba, and Mr. Jasokei was made its Secretary. The assembly passed four resolutions, of which two were important.

The first resolution said: We (the Naga representatives) agree that the Naga issue can only be solved through a satisfactory political settlement. The second said: A vast number of our people are at present underground and there are checks and controls on free movement. Because of this we are not able to travel, meet and freely talk among ourselves and with the government. Three: Before holding talks on a political settlement the following changes are necessary: The Naga Hills District of Assam and the Tuensang Frontier Division of the North East Frontier Agency (NEFA), along with the

protected forests which had been taken away from Naga Hills and transferred to Assam in 1921, be brought together and placed in one administrative unit under the External Affairs Ministry, to be administered on behalf of the President of India by the Governor of Assam. An amnesty be declared. Four: The convention promises to make all efforts to end killings and murders, so that the police and army units stationed in villages can return to their posts.

The first resolution was drawn up by the most respected person of the Nagas, Mr. A. Kevichusa, who had retired from the Indian Administrative Service and was then engaged in farming in Dimapur. It was passed unanimously. After reading it, Mr. Sudhin Dutt of the Intelligence Bureau, who had come from Shillong to Kohima to collect information for sending to Delhi, took it to a senior Naga officer, Major Bob Khating, and said that he had just had a talk with the Prime Minister on the phone who was of the view that after "a satisfactory political settlement", should be added words "within the framework of the Indian Union". Khating and his colleague, Jakhalu, told officials that in accordance with the Prime Minister's wishes, those words should be added. Mr. Kevichusa's argument was that the Nagas had to have a settlement with the Indian Union. There was no one else for them to come to a settlement with. He argued that the added words might upset the Underground Nagas. It was necessary to include the Underground in the process of peace making. Without that, the violence would not stop.

Suspecting that the Indian government had convened this convention to condemn them, the Underground opened fire on it on the first day. Two persons were wounded.

Intelligence Joint Director, Mr. Sudhin Dutt, informed the Assam Governor about the wording of the Kohima resolutions. The Governor then sent a telegram to the Assembly, saying, if the Naga representatives really wanted a satisfactory political settlement and were keen to end violence, they must add the words "within the Indian Union" to the resolution.

After a lot of debate and argument, a supplementary resolution was adopted which said that after "the receipt of a message from the Governor to the Chairman of the Convention, it is clarified that a political settlement meant that it would be with the Indian Union, so that nobody should have any doubt."

Carrying these resolutions, a delegation of nine Naga representatives, led by Dr. Imkongliba, went first to Shillong to meet the Governor, and then to Delhi to see the Prime Minister. The members were Dr. Imkongliba, Jasokie, Chiten Jamir, Luthipra Chakasang, Thamwang Konyak, Lujhokoo Sema, Tokiho Sema, Vizol and Isorhoma Lotha.

In Delhi, on September 25, 1957, the Prime Minister met them and said that accepting the resolution would mean amending the Constitution of India. He however assured them that he would present the resolution to Parliament in November.

The Prime minister agreed that the practice of placing villagers in army guarded concentration camps should stop, but he added that it would depend on the restoration of peace.

On the second day the Naga delegation met the Prime Minister again to tell him that joining the Naga Hills district with Tuensang and making it a centrally-administered unit would be an interim decision, not the final one. Nehru did not

like this interim business and said that it would not be possible to bring about frequent changes in the Constitution.

The Prime Minister however quite speedily completed the task of joining the Naga Hills District with Tuensang and placing the new unit under Central Administration. In December Naga Hills district was separated from Assam, joined with Tuensang Division, and the unit was called the Naga Hills-Tuensang Area (NHTA). It was placed under the External Affairs Ministry of the Union Government, to be administered by the Assam Governor. The demand for this had been made in August in Kohima. In September a Naga delegation had gone to Delhi and met the Prime Minister and in December, the proposal was accepted and a new centrally-ruled unit came into being. It was divided into three districts, Kohima, Mokokchung and Tuensang. Its first commissioner was Colonel P.N. Luthra.

The second Naga People's Convention was held in the large village of Ungma, in Ao area, from May 21 to 23, 1958. Some 40,000 Nagas took part in it. At the first convention, under the chairmanship of Mr. Kevichusa, the Nagas had set up a liaison committee to hold talks with Underground to persuade it to come to a political settlement with India, after reaching an understanding on the subject. This was a difficult task. With fighting raging, movement was difficult. The Kevichusa Committee was asked to hold talks with the Underground soon. At the instigation of government officials, some Naga leaders were either persuaded or pressurized not to hold talks with the Underground, leave them be in the jungle and demand from the Government of India a separate state for the Nagas. They believed that on obtaining a separate state the Underground would give up fighting and get involved in obtaining control of

the new state. It was also speculated that if the so-called liberal pro-India Nagas came to power, the underground would not fight with them.

The bureaucrats kept the 'liberals' keyed up to demand a separate state. The game of the bureaucrats, who were under the control of the second commissioner of Nagaland, Mr. Murkot Ramunni, was to set up a 'liberal' front.

The work of the liaison committee formed during the first Naga Peoples Convention was sidelined and the demand for a new state was raised instead, vigorously. For that a third Naga Peoples Convention was called in Mokokchung town from October 20 to October 26, 1959. The leader of the liberals was Dr. Imkongliba. Behind him was Mr. Shashimeren Aiyer, a powerful supporter of the demand for a separate state, and an officer in the Scheduled Castes and Tribes Commission of Government of India. He was from the Ao tribe, like Dr. Imkongliba, and considered himself a leader of villages around Chanki. He harboured enmity towards the Underground, for his brother, it was said, was killed by them.

How I came to be present at this third convention is a story in itself. In it the proposal of the first convention that the Nagas should arrive at a consensus among themselves through talks with the Underground, and then ask for a political settlement with India, was sidelined. It was decided that the 'liberals' should ask for a settlement with India.

It was at this convention that a proposal was made that the proposed Naga State should have a cabinet of six ministers and three deputy ministers. The new state was also to have a Legislative Assembly and elect two members to Lok-Sabha (Parliament) in Delhi.

When Mr. Kevichusa, the chairman of the liaison committee formed at the first Naga Peoples' Convention, saw the convention's objective of talking with the Underground to draw up a common demand for a settlement was being ignored, he resigned and stopped attending the convention. The Vice-President of the Convention, Mr. Vizol, did come from Kohima to Mokokchung for the third Convention. But when he saw the conspiracy to convert the convention into a political party to demand a separate Naga state, without discussion with the Underground, he too resigned and returned to Kohima before the convention started. Government officials began framing new proposals. They approached Naga officers and discussed what the Indian government could possibly give them and began framing demands accordingly.

In September 1958, the Governor of Assam and Nagaland, Syed Fazi Ali, was lying on his death-bed in Shillong. I came to know that the first Commissioner of the newly-created Naga Hills—Tuensang Area, Col. P.N. Luthra, was to come to meet him on the important third Naga Peoples' Convention. I thought of asking the Governor for permission to visit Mokokchung to report the convention. Journalists were prohibited from travelling without a permit beyond the 'Inner Line', created by the British, which divided Assam from Naga areas. I was the Northeast correspondent of *The Times of India* and wished to report the convention. I asked for an appointment with the Governor to seek his permission.

When I met the Governor, the Commissioner of the new Naga unit, Col. P.N. Luthra, was with him. I requested the Governor that I be given permission to go to Mokokchung to report the Naga convention. He asked the Commissioner if it would be all right? 'Yes, of course,' said the Commissioner.

But the permission never came. The Commissioner's assurance to the Governor obviously meant nothing. Then I decided to try my own way of entering Naga Hills. I went to Jorhat from Shillong. It is a trading town where Ao, Sema, Konyak, Chang and other Naga tribes come regularly to buy goods. I sent word to a friend in Mokokchung, Tokiho Sema, that I was staying in such and such hotel in Jorhat and asked him to come and fetch me.

When he came, I told him that I wanted to go to Mokokchung to write about the convention, but didn't have an Inner Line permit to enter. He said, "Come in my jeep". Early next morning when it was still dark we left Jorhat. After Mariani comes the Inner Line Checkpost, where permits are examined. Before reaching it, I got down from the jeep, trekked down through the forest to a small river below and started climbing up to meet the road a little ahead of the checkpoint. After walking for an hour, I bypassed the Inner Line gate and regained the road to Mokokchung beyond it. There Tokiho's jeep was waiting. Seated in it, I reached Mokokchung in two hours. I didn't stay in Tokiho's house but in another Naga friend's, where I left my luggage and went to the office of the Deputy Commissioner, Major Bob Khating. There, at that time, were present the Deputy Commissioners of Kohima, Mr. Ramunni, of Tuensang, Mr. Santuk, other officers and some 'liberal' Naga leaders. They got a shock seeing me. They had disregarded the governor's recommendation and decided not to allow me or any other newspaper correspondent to enter the area.

I said to Major Bob Khating: "I have come to inform you that I have arrived in Mokokchung. You can either arrest

me for entering without a permit or allow me to stay for the convention."

They all gave a sheepish laugh and Khating said, "Since you have come, you may stay. But tell us how you got here!"

On the very first day the convention got divided into two factions. One said without including the Underground no agreement with India was possible. The other, propped up by Intelligence and other Officers, said, if the Underground do not want to join, let them stay away. They can always endorse the agreement later on when they see its benefits. For their sake there is no need to stop the process of working towards an agreement.

Those, like the Convention Deputy Chairman, Mr. Vizol, in favour of all Nagas participating in drawing up an agreement, boycotted the convention. Its proceedings then remained in the hands of those who wanted Delhi to give them a separate Nagaland state. They tried to win over other Nagas, and said "we shall confront the Underground. The Indian army will be with us". The tempting bait was a separate state and the power it gave to those who hoped to get it. Money from the Centre or Delhi was expected to flow to those who would hold power in the new state. They would form a party of their supporters and become the new rulers.

A strong supporter of this policy was Mr. S.C. Jamir, of Ungma village of the Ao tribe, a graduate of Allahabad University. He was nominated, without election, to Parliament from the Naga Hills—Tuensang Area earlier. Because of the disturbed situation in Naga Hills holding an election to Parliament was not possible. In Delhi he became a Parliamentary Secretary to Prime Minister, Mr. Jawaharlal Nehru. After the

Delhi agreement on statehood, he stood for the first election to Parliament in 1971, and was defeated. Then he entered state politics and became chief minister four times from various parties for short periods. For 16 days the first time, then from 18 April 1980 to 4 June 1980; from 15 January 1989 to May 1990; from 22 February 1993 to 5 March 1998, and from March 5, 1998 to February 2003. Hopping from party to party he finally brought the Congress to power in the state. But in the 2003 election, the party lost in the state. Then he was appointed Governor of Goa, and later on of Maharashtra. He made efforts to become Nagaland Chief Minister again, but failed to win an election in the state.

In the first draft of a resolution of the third Naga Peoples Convention in Mokokchung there was no direct demand for creating a separate Nagaland state. It only said that Nagaland should be a component unit of India and that the governor of Assam should also be its governor. Some officials at the Centre in Delhi accepted the idea.

Kohima officials were telling liberal-minded Nagas to ask Delhi, "What can they convey to their people that would give them hope? Give us something concrete with which we can attract our people and wean them away from the influence of the Underground."

It was the time when other tribes of Assam, such as Khasi-Jaintia, Mikir (Karvi Anglong), North Cachar, Mizo and Garo, had also started demanding a separate state for them. The problem for the Centre was, on what ground could it deny them a separate state, if it accepted the demand of a Naga State? The Centre then was of the opinion that creation of numerous small states in Northeast would not be in the interests of India and could lead to problems other than of financing them.

Leading supporters of Naga 'liberals' were senior officials of Kohima, the foremost being the Commissioner, Mr. Ramunni. But he kept himself in the background. Those in front were Naga officers. They assumed the role of Naga leaders. Prominent among them was Mr. Shashimeren Aiyer, who was a senior officer of the Government of India and had taken leave to attend the Mokokchung convention, to spearhead the state demand.

I was regularly sending news dispatches to *The Times of India* on developments in Mokokchung. I wrote that if the Union Government came to an agreement with the 'liberal' Naga officials (retired or in service) to form a separate state, that would not solve the problem. The fight was between militant Nagas and the forces of the Government of India. The 'liberals' were not in the picture. In spite of an agreement with them, militants would continue to fight.

During the convention one day, when all officers along with the Commissioner were present in the Deputy Commissioner's office, I walked in. Shashimeren said to me angrily, "we know the reports you are sending!" (He read on the sly my dispatches given to the telegraph office to transmit to Delhi and Bombay, or had copies of them sent to him). "If you keep sending such reports we will not allow you to leave this place." It was a threat that they could detain me. I said "In that case, I shall gladly stay here."

Finally the convention drew up a 16-point resolution to be presented to the Governor and the Prime Minister. Its first point was: "This region known as the Naga Hills-Tuensang Area, or the Land of the Nagas, should be made a separate state, to be called Nagaland. It should be under the Ministry of

External Affairs of the Government of India." (All other states of the Indian Union were under the Home Ministry.)

In a statement directed at the Underground, the 'liberals' said, "You are invited to participate in the running of the new state."

This was a joke. Had the Underground not kept on their fight, the Naga Hills District would not have seceded from Assam or the Naga Hills-Tuensang Area Administrative Unit formed, or the demand for a new state of Nagaland, risen. All the pressure for a change in the Naga area was the result of Underground fighting. The 'liberal' leaders backed by officers in Kohima were trying to strike a deal with Delhi. "Give us Nagaland state and we shall have the fighting stopped."

The Centre increased funds for Naga areas, some of which went into the pockets of officers and 'liberal' leaders. But the Centre was still not in favour of creating a new state. If it was to be created, there would be a flood of demands for more states from other tribes of the Northeast. This did actually happen later.

On the one hand these 'liberal' Nagas were claiming that they were asking for a political settlement to stop the fighting, and on the other they were asking for more money from the Centre for fighting the Underground. It was on their advice that 2,800 Nagas were supplied weapons to organize Village Defence Guards. They were inciting villagers to ask for more weapons. The Underground were 'snatching' weapons from Village Defence Guards, while some Guards were going Underground with their weapon on their own.

The new Governor, General Srinagesh, appointed on September 15, 1959, after studying the situation felt that the

administration was egging on the 'liberals'. According to him the objective of the first convention of 1957 was to reach a political settlement within the Indian Union after consulting the Underground. It was not the creation of a new state. At the second Convention the plan to contact and bring around the Underground was shelved and a committee to draft a proposal for setting up a new and separate state was formed. This meant leaving the militants out of a settlement. It was with the militants that the Government of India had to come to a settlement for peace in the area, and not with the 'liberals' who had no conflict with the Government of India.

Appraising the situation, the Governor said that the Naga convention had failed in its task. Instead of making contact with the Underground and bringing it around, its leaders were asking for a separate state. The Governor suspected the Naga Hills-Tuensang Area administrative unit of being the source behind this new proposal. Many others also thought so. General Shrinagesh charged the Commissioner and the Deputy Commissioners of the Naga unit of supporting the demand for a state. According to the Governor, three possibilities were faced by the government: 1. Agree to the demand for a new state. This, according to him would weaken the government. Power would then pass from the administration to the 'liberal' Naga leaders, who would not be able to persuade the Underground to accept the settlement. Assam would oppose the creation of a new state, as its own tribes would then start fighting for separate states of their own. 2. The government could tell the convention that it had not succeeded in persuading the Underground to come to a settlement. Therefore the government would not talk with the convention for the time being, because whatever agreement

the two may reach may not be acceptable to the Underground and the fighting would continue. The need of a new Naga leadership capable of a dialogue with the Underground and convince it to settle the problem was felt. This could take years. 3. The convention's demand was immature and it had no impact on the Underground. The Nagas, he pointed out, did not want a state like other states of India, but a different kind, under the External Affairs Ministry. Creating a separate Naga state would cause problems for Assam where tribes wanted states of their own. Assam could lose all the tribes inhabiting its hill areas, which would not benefit either Assam or the country. The Governor's recommendation to the Prime Minister was to turn down the demand for a separate Naga state and bring about such changes in the administration which would convince the Nagas that those were for their good.

The Government of India was taken by surprise by the proposal for a separate state. The Prime Minister said he was unable to see how this demand could be accepted in a situation when fighting was going on. Nehru was in favour of total freedom for Nagas in their internal affairs. But he wanted law and order to stay with the Governor. A separate state would mean a steep hike in the expenditure of the Central government. Ministers would have to be appointed, they would need offices, staff, and a legislative assembly. Funds running into crores would be required. Expenditure on the army would also go up. Security for ministers and top officials would have to be arranged. To spend such a large amount on a small state would not be justifiable. The Nagas should establish a system of administration which was in keeping with their needs and traditions, not one based on imitating others. The leaders of

the Convention were told to hold talks with the Governor on these issues first.

The Governor felt there would be no need to set up a Naga Cabinet of Ministers. A Naga People's Assembly could be set up and its President appointed. Law and order would remain with Assam Governor. There could be two executive councillors and two deputy councillors for the Naga area.

The government felt the 'educated Nagas' had forgotten their traditional system of administration. They wanted to become chief minister and ministers to gain power and wealth, for which they were asking for a separate state. The Governor's proposal was for Nagas to convene another convention to strengthen the centrally-administered Naga Hills-Tuensang Area, develop it and bring about peace.

The Prime Minister did not wish to meet a Naga delegation or negotiating team. He told the Governor, General Shrinagesh, to conduct talks with the Nagas and tell them that because of the activities of the Underground, law and order was in a bad shape. This was not the time to seek a settlement with the Government of India. The first and foremost task of Naga leaders was restoration of peace. The Governor was told by Delhi that he should not talk of setting up a Naga Legislative Assembly and explain that creating a new state would need much money.

The Governor held talks with the Naga negotiating team in Shillong on April 8 or 9. On the first day, the Governor's advisor, Mr. Rustamjee, explained to the team that Nagas should have an administration based on their needs and traditions, not a copy of the system of other Indian states. It should be one that would be easily understood by the Naga

people. Their demand for a cabinet of ministers would be an extremely expensive affair which they could not afford. People felt sovereign and independent only when they were self-sufficient. An administration run on money from others would not be free.

But the Naga team did not relent. Brushing aside all arguments, its members said, "We have changed our demand from independence to one for a separate state in India. We had been told that we could ask for anything except independence." (Who said this to them, they did not disclose.) About expenditure on a new state administration, they said, "We the Nagas are the younger brother and India is the elder. Is it not the duty of the elder to look after the needs of the younger?"

If their demand was not considered, the talks would break down, and the "Naga fight would intensify", they threatened. This threat was issued by Mr. Shashimeren Aiyer. Behind him stood the Commissioner of the Naga Administrative Unit, Mr. Ramunni.

The Chairman of the Convention, Dr. Imkongliba, was not a political person. About the high expenditure on the proposed new state, he told the Governor that the government of the Underground Nagas did not pay high salaries to its employees. The new state could do the same. The demand for a separate state was the minimum demand of the Nagas. If the Governor had any problem accepting it, he should refer it to the Government of India for decision.

After that Prime Minister Nehru visited Assam Capital, Gauhati. There he discussed the Naga situation with the Governor, the Assam Chief Minister, Mr. Chaliha, Advisors, Mr. Rustomjee, and Dr. Verrier Elwin, and high officers of the Naga Hills-Tuensang area.

Present at these meetings was Commissioner Ramunni, the Deputy Commissioners of Kohima, Mr. Hazarika, of Mokokchung, Major Bob Khating and Mr. Suntuk of Tuensang, besides the army commander of the area, Major General Dinesh Chandra Mishra.

Mr. Ramunni said that the Government had to accept the demand of the Naga Convention. Mr. Zapuphizo had led the Naga people to violence. Against that violence, the Convention had provided the only alternative leadership. Formation of a separate state would be the final agreement between the Nagas and India. To prepare for that, consultation with Naga leaders should begin.

Mr. Nehru may have known that high-ranking officers posted in Kohima supported the demand for a separate state. Hearing their views, he lost his temper and lashed out at them, "It is sheer baby talk, what you are saying. Can any state of such a small size ever be self-sufficient?"

But the officers remained unmoved by his outburst and stood their ground. They said, they know from experience that the army, with even more troops, would not be able to solve the problem with force. Ninety five percent of people present at the Convention were non-militant Nagas. If their demand for a separate state was not conceded and they returned home empty handed, nobody would come up later for talks on the Naga issue with the Government.

It became clear that the Prime Minister, the Governor and the advisors had one point of view and the Commissioner and his officers a totally different one. Mr. Nehru finally said to them, "The Nagas possess no qualification for having a separate state. They have neither the numbers, nor funds or other means." He

cited the example of Coorg which was demanding a separate state, but it was too small and also without means. Mr. Nehru said the Nagas should remain with Assam. A separate state of their own would not be right. A separate administrative unit for the Nagas had been created in 1957, he pointed out, which functioned under the Governor. Except for law and order and economic matters, Nagas had the fullest freedom to strengthen their traditional system in villages and region. He was ready to meet Naga representatives in Delhi, but, he added, this would not be possible for the next two to three months due to pressure of work on him.

It was clear that Nehru opposed a separate state for Nagas.

Just then, a surprising event occurred. The Naga leader, Mr. Zapuphizo, about whom the Government had told the Lok Sabha or Parliament that there was no news of him for about three years and that it was likely that he was dead, suddenly surfaced in London, in June 1960. The news upset the Delhi government. It was known that to secure help from foreign countries for Naga independence, Mr. Zapuphizo had gone out. He himself had said that he would get the Naga issue raised at the United Nations. For this he had collected funds from Naga villages and had departed with a large amount. He also planned to buy weapons to send home.

The Delhi government was taken aback by his appearance in London and becoming a British citizen. It did not know how he managed to do that. It also did not know how the British government gave him asylum and citizenship.

In Indian Parliament, some members said India should leave the Commonwealth in protest against London giving him asylum without informing Delhi. Nehru did not agree.

India was concerned about Zapuphizo going to the United Nations, with which he was in correspondence, with accounts of Naga killings and trying to solicit from Western nations political, economic and military help for his war of independence.

This development made Nehru and the Indian government change their stance on Nagas' demand for a separate state. Why not agree to the demand of the Naga Convention? If charges were made against India that it was ruling the Nagas against their will and the Indian army was killing people there to put down a rebellion, the Government could say, after giving them a separate state, that the Nagas had a state of their own like other people of India. It was at the request of that state government that the Indian army was sent there to keep peace and punish trouble makers, in accordance with law. Whatever was happening there was in response to appeals from an elected Naga State Assembly.

Mr. Nehru pondered over this argument. An invitation to meet the Prime Minister was then sent on 26 July 1960 to a team of the Naga Convention.

As stated earlier, a supporter of the demand for a Naga state was Commissioner Ramunni, along with his officials. He was instrumental in making the pro-India Nagas declare that their agreement with the Government of India for a separate state would be the final one.

The arrival of the Zapuphizo in London influenced Mr. Nehru's thinking on setting up a Naga state and made him give up his strong opposition to it.

During three days of talks in Delhi an Agreement on a separate Naga state was concluded in July, 1960. Commissioner

Ramunni who was rebuked by Mr. Nehru three months earlier for 'his childish prattle' about a separate state, was saying the Naga problem could not be solved by the army and a political solution of it was possible only by accepting the proposal of the Naga Convention. Only a separate state would satisfy the aspirations of the Naga people. This was the last chance for India to recognize this fact.

There were 16 points in the Naga agreement with Delhi. One of them was the unification of all Naga areas, spread in various states. Naga leaders said all Naga areas in adjacent states should become part of a new Nagaland state. The Indian government said Articles three and four of the Constitution certainly did lay down that the area of a state could be increased, but at the moment the Government of India was unable to make a commitment on that subject.

The Chairman of the Naga People's Convention, Dr. Imkongliba, was murdered in his hometown, Mokokchung, within a month of the signing of the Delhi agreement on a separate Naga state, by a youth of his own tribe.

Just a month after an agreement on a Nagaland state, Mr. Nehru issued orders for the removal of Mr. Ramunni from his office. On August 26, 1960, Naga militants attacked and surrounded an Assam Rifles' post at Purr, on Burma border. In two days of fighting, Assam Rifles' supplies of food, water and ammunition ran out. Two Dakota aircraft of the Indian Air Force were then sent to drop them supplies with parachutes. Naga militants opened rifle fire on the planes and damaged them. One managed to make it back to its base somehow, but the other, damaged more seriously, had to land in a nearby field. The militants captured all its 14 crew members. Five of

them were given a letter to the Prime Minister and set free. The rest were held captive and released much later in Myanmar. That Indian Airmen be held captive by Nagas was unacceptable to Indian Armed Forces. To know their whereabouts and get them released, the army Chief of General Staff, Lt. General B.M. Kaul, flew to Shillong and held consultations with the Governor on securing their release. The first idea was that the Air Force should bomb the area where the prisoners may be held. Somebody then pointed out that that could kill the airmen, so the idea was abandoned.

From Kohima, Commissioner Ramunni rushed by jeep to Chakesang area where the captured men were taken, to request the Underground to release them. With the help of villagers considered sympathizers of the Underground, he made efforts to establish contact and began talks to get them freed.

In Delhi, Nehru exploded with anger on hearing that Mr. Ramunni had gone to beg the Underground for the release of the Airmen. Mr. Ramunni in the past had been the most vocal in arguing that by giving a separate state to the Nagas the militants would give up violence and take to ways of peace. One month after signing an agreement on a separate state, he was going around looking for militants to request them to release the air crew they had taken hostage.

Mr. Nehru wrote a letter to the Governor, General Shrinagesh, saying, "I have come to know, with utter surprise and total incomprehension, that officers expected to act with responsibility, have behaved in ways that lower the standing and prestige of the country". The Prime Minister wrote that the Commissioner had acted in a highly improper way, for which he should be removed from office immediately. (See

the book by Advisor for Northeast, Mr. N.K. Rustamjee, '*Enchanted Frontiers*', p. 251, Oxford University Press). Advisor Rustamjee, top official of the Northeast, had written that the extremely angry letter from the Prime Minister struck him and the Governor like lightning. Lost for words, they stared at each other and speculated dumbly which man's head was going to roll. Their orders were to come to Delhi straightaway and meet the Prime Minister.

The next day, Mr. Rustamjee, accompanied by the commanders of the Army and Air Force, and secretaries of the Ministries of Defence and External Affairs, considered 'courageous and strong', stepped into the Prime Minister's office. How 'courageous and strong' they were, Mr. Rustamjee describes:

"All the five of us stood before the Prime Minister's table. The Prime Minister was explosive with anger. Seeing us standing around, he snapped, 'Sit down, for God's sake!' Like puppets whose strings were being tugged, the five of us sank into chairs and waited for Nehruji's missiles of words to come down upon us.

'I am astonished that there is not a man among you who (in this situation) acted with foresight and control. Those people have shot down our plane and taken captive its crew. And over this trifling affair all of you have bowed down on bent knees to beg for their release! Is this the way our Army and Air Force should function? Come on now, look sharp! What's to be done next? Give me your plan!' Mr. Nehru demanded.

Rustamjee writes: "After this I went to the Foreign Secretary to tell him that the Prime Minister had given an unfair order against the Commissioner by asking for his removal. All of us

are responsible for the wrong action of the Commissioner and equal punishment should be given to us all."

"Rustamjee, you have no idea how seriously the Prime Minister is viewing this act of the Commissioner (of begging forgiveness of the Underground Nagas). It will serve no purpose saying anything to the Prime Minister on his order to remove the Commissioner. He will not change his decision. He is leaving for America tomorrow. If by the time he returns the Commissioner has not been removed from office, well, God help you!" This was the Foreign Secretary's answer.

On coming back from America Mr. Nehru forgot his order. An investigating committee was set up to go into the Commissioner's act of establishing contact with the underground. And in the course of the investigation everything cooled off!

Chapter 8

Movement Founder Zapuphizo

The First and Second World Wars brought a great deal of political consciousness everywhere, including the Naga country. A starving and exhausted Japanese army, after advancing over seven thousand kilometers from home had practically ended a century old British rule in Naga Hills. An ally of the advancing, and eventually retreating, Japanese army was Angami Zapuphizo of Khonoma village, who can be called the father of Naga nationalism.

He was born around 1905, in Pelhu family of Merema Khel of Khonoma village. Like others of Khonoma village, his people had fought the British army in 1879, spent some two years in wilderness, subsisting on roots and wild leaves, faced death from starvation, and then came to the British pleading to be allowed to return to live in the village. Zapuphizo's father was Kruseto, who died when he was sixty. His mother lived a hundred years and died in 1969. There was no high school at Kohima in 1915, so Zapuphizo went to the capital of Assam, Shillong, for studies. Only two students had gone from Khonoma to Shillong for high school. The other was a distant cousin of his, Angami Kevichusa. Zapuphizo was practical and clever, but not good at studies. He couldn't pass his

matriculation examination and came back to Kohima to live. His fellow student, Kevichusa passed high school, Bachelor of Arts from St. Paul's College, Calcutta, returned in Kohima and became a teacher at the first high school set up there. Later on, he passed the Assam Civil Services examination and became an officer of the Assam Government.

Zapuphizo wanted to move ahead in life, so he did not return to Khonoma village and looked around for opportunities in Kohima, the district headquarters. In 1925 work began on the 200 kilometer stretch of the rough bullock cart track that ran from Dimapur to Imphal, in Manipur, to make it a motor road. Soon lorries were plying on it. Zapuphizo thought, why not set up a small workshop in Kohima to re-tread worn rubber lorry tyres and make them fit to run a few thousand more kilometers? He had no money, so he borrowed from merchants of Kohima and Jotsoma villages, and set up a small workshop. Interest rates in Naga country in those days were astounding, over 30 per cent. Zapuphizo's idea was no doubt good, but lorries took their cargo at the railway station of Dimapur and then went straight to Imphal in Manipur, and spent the night there. In Kohima they only loaded and unloaded goods, took passengers, but it was not a halting place for them. Muslim craftsmen who repaired or retreaded tyres lived mostly in Dimapur or Imphal. They found living and food in Kohima unsuitable and expensive, while in Dimapur and Imphal it was reasonable. A lorry owner wanting his tyres repaired got the job done in Imphal or Dimapur. Consequently, Zapuphizo's workshop in Kohima did not get work. Let alone return the loan, he couldn't even pay back interest.

The money-lenders then filed a case against him in the court of the British Deputy Commissioner, Charles Pawsie

(knighted later). Pawsie saw that Zapuphizo had no means of returning the loan. According to customary laws of Angami Naga society, anyone unable to repay debt lost his right to live with dignity and honour in his society and had to leave his place and go elsewhere to make a living. Charles Pawsie then ordered Zapuphizo to leave the Angami country. He left for Rangoon, in Burma, to live there. His wife too joined him in Rangoon, leaving their elder daughter, Adino, with relatives in Khonoma. Adino, now over 70, went to England in 1966 with the help of the then Assam Chief Minister, Mr. Bimla Prasad Chaliha, to take care of her elderly father who was living there. There, on April 30, 1990, upon the death of her father, she declared herself the inheritor of the position of President of the Naga political organization, the Naga National Council.

This organization is now divided, which is a separate story.

Zapuphizo made his younger brother, Keviyaley, come over to Burma, and got him admitted to a Christian seminary there.

The forties of the last century were stormy because of the Second World War. The Japanese army entered Burma, drove out the British and began advancing towards India. Its declared policy was that Asia belonged to Asians, not to Europeans. By driving British colonialists out of India, Japan wanted to create an "Asian Co-prosperity Sphere". A prominent Indian nationalist leader, Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose, had arrived in Tokyo, from where he went to Singapore where he created an army of Indian soldiers who had surrendered to Japanese in the war in Southeast Asia. He called it Azad Hind Fauj (free Indian army). Zapuphizo became a supporter of the Japanese policy of expelling the British.

After years of fighting and taking over almost all islands in the Pacific Ocean and countries of East and Southeast Asia, the Japanese army was exhausted. It could not advance into India and was driven back from Naga Hills where it had arrived. Zapuphizo came with it, perhaps up to Manipur, and then went back to Burma. After the British regained control of Rangoon and Burma, their regime began looking for those who had collaborated with the Japanese. Zapuphizo's name came up and he was put in jail. On coming to know that he belonged to the Naga Hills of India and not to Burma, he was transferred from Rangoon to a jail in Kolkata. He was subsequently released and allowed to go back to Kohima.

In Burma Zapuphizo had become a political person. The British were getting ready to give up their colonies and the people in them were asking for independence. Muslims of India were asking for a separate homeland, Pakistan, for themselves. Some Maharajas or princely rulers of India were declaring themselves and their territories independent. Anglo-Indians were leaving India for Australia, Canada, America and England.

While he was in Burma, Zapuphizo had a paralytic stroke, which left half his face distorted, his one eye watering all the time.

To give a measure of autonomy to Indians, the British Parliament had passed the 1935 Act with enabled provinces of India to elect legislatures and look after their law and order. But the Naga Hills District of Assam was not given this right. The reason was that many tribes lived there, each with its own laws and customs. All of them were also kept out of the purview of laws passed by the Assam Provincial Assembly and the Central Legislative Council. The Naga Hills District had been declared

a backward area, excluded from the India Act of 1919. On March 3, 1936, when the 1935 Act became applicable, the British kept the district out of its purview. The British declared it an Excluded Area, and placed its administration under the Governor of Assam, so that it would be ruled in accordance with conditions prevailing in it. The situation in it was different from other districts of Assam and the rest of the country. It was also decided that none of the laws passed by the Central Legislative Assembly or the Assam State Assembly would be applicable in Naga Hills and it was kept out of the framework of the Indian laws and administrative system.

The Naga country was divided in tribal zones. It had been conquered by the British in 1879 and joined to Assam state. Its northern Naga area was called Tuensang, and was not directly administered by the British. It was called an un-administered or excluded Area. Nagas also lived in Tirap and Changlang areas of the North East Frontier Agency. After Indian independence in 1947, Tirap, Changlang and Tuensang and some other areas were brought under Delhi's central administration when the North East Frontier Agency, (NEFA) was formed.

Apart from these regions, Naga people also lived in the hills of Manipur, southeast of Kohima, and in the west in Diphu and Mikir (now Karvi-Anglong) districts of Assam. But until independence, the main Naga country was known as the Naga Hills District of Assam and the neighbouring area of Tuensaang Division.

After being sent out of Burma and released from a jail in Kolkata, Mr. Zapuphizo returned to Kohima in 1946 and became active in politics there.

In 1918, Nagas under the British administration had set up

their first organization, the Naga Club. Its centres were Kohima and Mokokchung. Its aim was to improve their Social System. It opened co-operative stores for selling essential commodities. A significant task it performed was presenting a memorandum to the Simon Commission sent by British Parliament to India; to give Indians some political rights without reducing British overall control. The Simon Commission was to find out the reaction of Indians to British proposals on changes to be made in governing the country. In the Commission was the British M.P., Mr. Clement Attlee, who became the Prime Minister of Britain after the Second World War. When the Simon Commission came to Kohima on January 10, 1929, the Naga Club submitted a memorandum to it. Nagas of twenty clans said they knew that Britain was about to make changes in the administration of India. In the course of these changes, if the Nagas were placed in the administration of either Assam or Delhi, they would not be able to pay the taxes that those governments may levy. In addition, new laws which would be made for Assam would be different from the traditional laws of the Nagas. Those new laws would break the social structure of Naga tribes. Changes may make the Nagas lose the ownership of their land. Apart from land Nagas owned nothing. They were backward compared to Indians. They had very few educated people. If they were elected to the legislature of Assam they would be so few in number there that they would not be able to safeguard the interests of their people. For that reason (they submitted) whatever new set up the British Parliament devices for India, the Nagas be kept out of it so that they may continue to maintain the features of their society and were not made subject to laws and taxes of others.

It was on the basis of this memorandum that Britain kept the Naga territories out of the purview of the India Act of 1935, passed by the British Parliament.

Nagas wanted to set up their own administrative structures. Their Lotha tribe, in 1923, was the first to set up its own council of governance. The Aos set up their Tribal Council in 1928, and restructured it in 1930. In the forties other tribes established their own councils. To integrate these tribes, the Deputy Commissioner, Charles Pawsie, set up a joint Naga Hills District Tribal Council in April 1945. Its members called an assembly on February 2, 1946, and changed the name of the Naga Club to Naga National Council, the only organization of Nagas. In the beginning its aim was social development and the administration gave it recognition, viewing it as a force of integration and intellectual deliberation. But soon it became more than that and began taking decisions on Nagas' political aspirations.

On the basis of Naga clans it had 29 members, who chose its office bearers. Each Naga family contributed to its expenses, according to its means. Its first President was Aliba Imti of the Ao tribe.

The biggest challenge that faced the Council was over what the Nagas should do in the twilight years of the termination of British rule in India? A majority favoured talks with Indian leaders who were soon to take over the reins of government, on special constitutional provisions safeguarding the interest of Nagas. Some wanted a separate constitution for Naga territory. Indian leaders in Delhi or Shillong had no idea of what Naga society was like and how they could safeguard Naga interests in the new Indian constitution they were going to draft.

Zapuphizo had not formed his own organization by then but had issued a call to say that the Nagas had the right to independence. All members of the Naga National Council were not with him on that.

In April 1946 a British Cabinet Mission came to India for talks with Indian leaders. Some leaders of the Naga National Council went to Delhi to meet the Mission. They said to its members on April 9, 1946, that no unilateral decision taken by the British government on Naga areas would be acceptable without consultation with them.

On February 20, 1947, the Naga National Council sent an appeal to the British Government that it make the Government of India the guardian of the Naga territory for a ten year period. At the end of it, the Nagas would determine their future themselves. This appeal was sent to the last British Viceroy, Lord Mountbatten, in the form of a memorandum.

Meanwhile some British leaders had drawn up a plan for the creation of a Trust Territory or a Crown Colony of Naga Hills District, the North East Frontier Agency and the indigenous peoples of northern Burma. The crown colony was to remain under British rule, it was proposed.

The Naga National Council strongly opposed this plan, while some sections of the indigenous people of Burma, not wanting to be dominated by the Burmese society, welcomed it. Nagas said since the British were going away from India, they might as well go from Naga areas also. They said they will not tolerate any kind of neo-colonialism in their area. The Indian National Congress too was opposed to the re-establishment of imperialism in any form.

Later in 1950s, some semi-educated Indians began propagating that the Nagas preferred to remain under British

control and not in India. If this was so, British imperialism would have continued to this day in the Northeast.

Deciding that the British had no option but to quit, the Nagas faced another significant decision. The question was, should they straightaway declare themselves as an independent state? In June 1947 the Naga National Council said when India became free, Naga Hills would not remain a part of it. There was quite a bit of difference of opinion on this. Zapuphizo's group was in favour of an immediate declaration of independence. A moderate section was in favour of staying in India until the Nagas were able of running an independent country of their own. After consultations, it was decided that for ten years India be made the guardian of Naga areas, at the end of which the Nagas would decide on their future. A memorandum on these lines was sent to the last British viceroy, Lord Mountbatten.

Zapuphizo was a disciplined man, severe in nature and given to working hard. He imposed the highest degree of discipline on himself. Working non-stop and not accepting defeat however difficult the task, were his hallmark. With him were some men of his village as well as quite a few of other Angami villages. There were also moderate elements in the Naga National Council who were in favour of giving more thought to the situation and for a more restrained approach. They did not think it was possible for Nagas to ask for independence immediately and wished to live with India in a spirit of understanding that would benefit their people. Zapuphizo was intolerant of this section and in 1949 won the elections to the Presidentship of the Naga National Council on the issue of Naga independence.

At that time India was framing its Constitution. On the issue of special provisions for indigenous or tribal people of

India in its constitution, especially the Nagas, Indian leaders decided to hold talks with them.

The Northeast is the largest region of indigenous or tribal people in India. On May 20, 1947, a sub-committee of the advisory committee of the Constitution makers came to Kohima to talk with Nagas about their political future. Difference of opinion cropped up in the course of the talks. The Nagas said they would themselves determine their political future after a ten-year period with India. The president of the sub-committee, Mr. Gopinath Bardoloi, Chief Minister of Assam, said in his report that he would recommend safeguards for social, economic, political and general welfare of the Naga people. Since he was drawing up a Constitution for India, he would not be able to say that some of its people wanted their future to be determined ten years after independence.

During the ten years period, the Naga National Council said, it or its government would have all rights to land, law making, administration, taxes and economic and legal structures.

On security matters and in times of emergency the protecting power (India) would keep its army in Naga area, and India would be accountable to the Naga National Council.

Immediately after the departure of the Constitution Sub-Committee from Kohima, the Governor of Assam, Sir Akbar Hydari, came there. He held talks with leaders of the Naga National Council from 27 to 29 June. After the talks a nine-point agreement was drawn up which among other things said for ten years the Nagas would be administered by India. The agreement also said that all expenses incurred by the Naga National Council on local administration would be borne by itself. The ninth point said: The Governor of Assam,

as the representative of the Government of India, would be responsible for implementing this agreement. At the end of ten years the Naga National Council would be asked if it wished to extend this arrangement or make a new one.

The Governor signed this agreement as the representative of the Government of India.

It was not stated explicitly that the agreement gave the Nagas the right to determine their own future after ten years.

The Nagas were told that the agreement would be included in the Constitution of India.

Fearing that the Nagas may say at the end of ten years that they did not wish to remain in India, the Indian government backtracked from the agreement and it was not included in the Constitution.

In 1946-47, during the talks with Nagas, Mr. Jawaharlal Nehru, as the President of the Indian National Congress, wrote a long and a nice letter to the General Secretary of the Naga National Council, Mr. T. Sakharie. The letter said that the small region of Nagas lacked the capacity to be self-dependent in economic and political matters. Situated between two large countries—India and China—this land was not sufficiently developed. Its people needed help. When India becomes free, the British empire would not be able to retain control over Naga areas. It was natural for this region to be a part of India and of Assam with which it was closely connected. Although it would be a part Assam, its present system of administration would be continued and changes, if any, would be decided through talks with Nagas.

Nehru wrote: "I am in favour of uniting all Naga territories. Why should some parts be outside the administration (excluded area)? Over the whole of it let an elected Naga National Council

have power. Representatives of Nagas should also be in the Assam Legislative Assembly so that they can take part in the development of the state.

"I am happy to note that the Naga National Council upholds the unity of all Naga tribes, including those who live outside the proposed administration. I fully agree with you that Naga Hills should constitutionally become an autonomous region of Assam.

"I see no reason for making laws of other areas made applicable to the Naga Hills District. It should run its own gaon sabhas (village bodies) and panchayats, and make them stronger by giving them more powers."

These were perhaps his personal feelings.

After becoming Prime Minister he talked with the Nagas only through his officials or the army or on advice tendered by them.

The nine-point agreement was not acceptable to Zapuphizo and his colleagues. They wanted to proclaim independence as soon as British rule ended. The Deputy Commissioner, Sir Charles Pawsie, thereupon called a meeting of the Council and asked its members to consider the nine-point agreement. A majority of members were not in favour of the agreement or for talking with India. They passed a resolution to that effect.

The opponents of the agreement, Zapuphizo and five members of its Naga National Council, thereupon came to Delhi in July, 1947. There they met Mahatma Gandhi in Bhangi Colony on 19 July and said to him that Naga Hills should be independent of India.

Gandhiji said, "The Nagas have full right to be independent." When the Nagas said that they would declare

their independence on August 14, Gandhiji asked, "Why not now? Where's the need to wait until the fourteenth of August? I became free a long time ago."

Suspecting that Gandhiji may not be serious, the Nagas said that the Governor, Sir Akbar Hydari, had threatened them that if they declared independence the army would be used against them, which meant that some of them would be arrested or shot. Hearing this, Gandhiji became grave. He said, Sir Akbar Hydari was mistaken. "He cannot do this. If he does, I shall come to Kohima and tell him to shoot me before shooting any Naga."

Before that situation could arise, Godse, on January 30, 1948, killed Gandhiji.

Gandhiji told the Nagas when they met him, "If you do not accept that India is your country, no one can force you. I personally think that in the way Naga Hills is yours, it is mine too. If you say that it is not mine, the matter ends there. I subscribe to the idea of brotherhood of man, and do not believe in forcible union. If you do not wish to be a part of India, nobody can force you. The Congress will not do this."

On November 28, 1949, a Naga representative group met the first Governor-General of India, Chakravarti Rajagopalachari, in Shillong. Rajaji said to the group, "India wants friendship with you. It does not want to appropriate the land of the Nagas. The Nagas have the freedom to act as they want, to be a part of India, or stay outside if they think they have the right to do so. Let them say so."

The idea of Naga independence developed forcefully. Zapuphizo organized his village and the Angami tribe in support of his idea of independence and sidelined the thinking

of others in the Naga National Council. Mr. Kevichusa had favoured a re-evaluation of the situation and a dialogue with India for exploring all possibilities. Mr. Zapuphizo said Mr. Kevichasa was a government official and his thinking was therefore limited.

In India, Burma and European colonies the world over, the demand for independence was growing. For Nagas too this slogan was attractive and heady. On ways and means of gaining freedom and defending it, radical Naga elements did not want to waste time. They said let freedom come first and then they would think of other things. Where was the money for running an independent state to come from? To this they said that for ten years the guardian state (India) would meet this need. By impressing some of his people with his fast decision-making, Zapuphizo was elected to Presidentship of the Naga National Council towards the end of 1949.

He decided to conduct a poll in which every adult Naga was to be asked to state his choice of either remaining in India or in an independent Naga state? He inaugurated the poll on May 16, 1951. It is said that in one single day thumb impressions in favour of independence were obtained from seven thousand men and women. From this preliminary exercise it was clear that the people would vote in favour of independence.

Would living in India be an advantage to Nagas? The people did not consider this question in depth. For them freedom meant that their life would continue as before and no external force would interfere with it. The people wanted to keep their living simple. Extremist Nagas were saying that by living in India taxes would be imposed on them. There was no telling, they said, how many villages and the lands of how many

farmers would be appropriated by the Indian government, no telling what kind of Indian officials would come and subject them to their whims and fancies!

The Nagas wanted none of this. They had got used to British officials administering them without interfering in their system. The Nagas were not ready to take on the danger of being ruled by other outsiders.

Like a whirlwind, Zapuphizo went from village to village and collected signatures and thumb impressions of people on his register, in favour of Naga independence. Oaths to fight for freedom were taken in solemn traditional ceremonies. Oaths have a great significance in Naga society. Breaking on oath is considered most demeaning and losing one's self-respect.

From almost 99 percent of people in the two parts of the Naga Hills—Kohima and Mokokchung, Zapuphizo collected signatures and thumb impressions of people stating their choice. He termed this a plebiscite. It strengthened his position in Naga politics. The Indian government and the state government of Assam viewed the plebiscite a trick. And seeing him emerge victorious, both governments considered him an enemy.

The Chief Minister of Assam, Mr. Gopinath Bardoloi, came to Kohima many times in 1946, and met Zapuphizo, which led to mutual respect, but no agreement was made. With Zapuphizo Mr. Bordoloi formed ties of friendship on a personal level but no steps were taken to prevent unrest in Naga Hills. Those were the days of the transfer of power from Britain to India and tension ran high in Naga areas. To understand the political temper and situation, there was a lot of traffic of officials of Delhi and Shillong to Kohima.

On August 5, 1950, Gopinath Bardoloi passed away. The new chief minister was Mr. Bishnuram Medhi. Medhi, was an

intolerant person who had spoken a great deal against Naga independence. On December 2, 1953, he said: "The talk of freedom has been raised by a handful of Nagas and they are all Christian. All this is being done at the instigation of foreign Christian missionaries, to keep the Nagas away from India. The British rulers sowed the seeds of independence in the minds of the Nagas through the agency of preachers of Christian religion."

In Assam legislature, in 1954, he said, "The Nagas of Burma have accepted the constitution of Burma. The Nagas living in our Mikir and North Cachar Hills are not in favour of independence, nor are the Nagas of Tuensang in NEFA. Why then are a handful of Nagas demanding independent Nagaland?" He said, the Nagas are citizens of India and have the same freedom as other Indians. In some respects they have more freedom than others. I do not accept this plebiscite. It is only the opinion of some members of the Naga National Council. They talk of non-violence. We will not allow the crimes and murders that they carry out under the cover of their so-called non-violence. We shall impose curbs on their anti-India activities. We shall make laws which will do them good and benefit them. They will be given work and jobs. The tasks of opening schools and laying roads will continue. Some Nagas are in high positions in the government. Nagas will get to believe that staying in India will be of benefit to them. After some years of peaceful living, they will themselves come to see the meaninglessness of their campaign for freedom.

The President of the Assam State Congress, Mr. Bimla Prasad Chaliha, in 1953, came twice to the Naga Hills. He travelled on foot into the interior to talk with the people. His

speeches and statements were of hope to the Nagas. He said: "Changes are possible in Indian Constitution, and faults in it can be rectified. It aims at the fulfillment of the aspirations of all people. Free India is still in its infancy. It cannot contemplate the separation of any part of it, especially when that part is of importance for its border and security reasons. If this is ignored it will harm both sides, the part that breaks away and India as a whole. The people of Assam want to stay with you. For us your relationship is crucial. I shall continue to make attempts for the unity of the two with all my being. If you do not have trust in me please do let me know!"

Although the Nagas turned down the appeal of Mr. Chaliha to understand the spirit of the Constitution and work according to it, he left a deep and lasting impression on their mind of his honesty and sincerity. On October 21, 1953, Mr. Chaliha came again to Naga Hills, but by then the situation had taken a turn for the worse.

No accommodation in the Indian Constitution was found possible for the outcome of talks between Naga leaders and the Government. Under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India some provisions for self-government for indigenous people of the Northeast were made, but economic and administrative matters remained in the hands of the state and central authorities. The Naga National Council boycotted not just the Sixth Schedule but the entire Indian Constitution.

To make their stand clear beyond doubt, Nagas boycotted the first general election of India, held in 1952. Not a single Naga stood as a candidate for either Parliament or the Assam State Assembly or an autonomous District Council that was to be set up according to the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution.

In the second general elections in 1957, only three Nagas stood as candidates—Kheloshe Sema, Subatmas Ao, and Subedar Satso Angami. Since nobody else contested or voted, all the three were elected unopposed to the Assam State Legislature. Kheloshe Sema was made a Deputy Minister. But after six months all the three came back from the legislature. The central government separated the Naga Hills District from Assam, joined it to Tuensang and set up a new unit, the Naga Hills-Tuensang Area (NHTA). Separating this region from Assam, the government placed it under the administrative control of the External Affairs Ministry of Delhi. This was recommended by the Joint Director of the Central Intelligence Bureau in the Northeast, Mr. Sudhin Dutt. He had argued that the separatist Underground Nagas would be pleased by taking away Naga Hills from Assam control and would end their fighting. His view was that the Nagas' fight was not against India but against the oppressive rule of Assam. Sudhin Dutt was a Bengali from Dhubri district of Assam. The Bengali elite traditionally dismissed the Assamese as backward and unintelligent.

The surprising part of it was that the Prime Minister, Mr. Jawaharlal Nehru, and his government swallowed this analysis of the police officer. The story of this development is written by the Director of the Indian Intelligence Bureau., Mr. B.N. Mallik, in his book '*My Years With Nehru*'. Mallik was the intelligence head who, through some false or incorrect reports about the Chinese brought about the Indo-Chinese border war of 1962. By that time Nehru had put an end to his own analysis and begun taking decisions on the basis of reports of his officers.

A year after the outbreak of fighting in Naga country in 1956, Zapuphizo went off to East Pakistan.

Before leaving India, Zapuphizo in 1954-55 formed his armed group and created the Naga Home Guards. Nagas of many tribes were recruited, though many were of his own Angami tribe, with some Semas. He made Thogdi Chang of the Chang tribe their commander. In June 1956 this armed group came to Kohima. Kohima at that time was the largest village, with a population of over eleven thousand. Situated 100 feet below the village, or half a kilometer down, began Kohima town. From the village the whole town and the area below was visible.

From the time of British rule, when Indian forces were not stationed in Kohima, the Assam Rifles, a para-military force, was posted there with the strength of a battalion, its third. Tin-roofed barracks of the Assam Rifles were spread below the city and the village. From the village every barrack, parade ground and office of Assam Rifles below were visible. Besides, platoons of the Assam State Armed Police stayed in camps around in the city. Over a hundred fighters of the Sema tribe joined Zapuphizo's Naga Homeguards. Their leader was young Kaito Sema, educated, born to a family of chiefs. His father, Kohoto, by virtue of being a Chief, was the main interpreter of the British—one who handled some aspects of administrative work in Naga languages.

Thongdi Chang appointed by Zapuphizo, was middle aged, lacking in cleverness, unfamiliar with fighting and weak in taking decision. Kaito was better in all respects, and with his many Sema militants, powerful. Because of his power and cleverness Zapuphizo did not fully trust him. Kaito did not

like to work under the leadership of Thongdi Chang. With his Sema fighters he participated in the attack on Kohima initially but then left and went to his own Sema area.

The Nagas had planned to attack Kohima town from the village on June 13, 1956. After taking over Kohima village and subduing the Assam Rifles they were to declare Kohima a Naga-controlled area. On the first day of their attack they had a large meal of rice and pork and then under Thongdi Chang began raining bullets on the Assam Rifles' camp below. There was return of fire. The market closed down and all movement came to a standstill. Intermittent firing went on the whole day. At sundown Naga Homeguards stopped firing, killed a couple of pigs, got busy preparing dinner, ate, went to sleep and did not continue their attack. Only after cooking and consuming their morning meal around 9 a.m. they picked up their rifles and began firing again. Things went on in this fashion for a couple of days. Let alone try to take over the area of the Assam Rifles, Thongdi's fighters did not even try to take the market, the deputy commissioner's office, the treasury and the district headquarters offices. If they had tried Kohima town would have come in their control before the Indian troops arrived.

Some Nagas however fought with vigour on the Kohima-Imphal Road, killing some forty police and civilians. The Assam Rifles from its Kohima Headquarters sent wireless messages to Shillong and Delhi to say that Kohima was under attack. Thereupon Indian troops sent to Tuensang to put down Naga fighters there in 1955, along with other battalions started moving to Kohima from Dimapur. Reaching Kohima, they drove out Thongdi's militants from the village in three days. The army searched the village and arrested those who

had provided Thongdi's men accommodation and facilities and beat them up in punishment. To get information about who and how many Nagas were involved in the attack, villagers were subjected to interrogation and torture.

After the unsuccessful attack on Kohima, the military leadership of Thongdi Chang ended. The Naga Homeguards became the Naga Army, and its leadership passed on to Kaito. Why didn't Zapuphizo give the leadership to Kaito in the beginning? The reason was the distrust among Naga tribes. Zapuphizo was Angami, and Kaito Sema. Political leadership of Nagas was in the hands of Angamis. The Semas were numerous, united and had joined Naga fighters in good numbers. The Angamis feared that they might take over the political leadership of the movement and so Zapuphizo did not trust them.

Naga militants were small in numbers while Indian troops armed with modern weapons numbered many times more. In such an unequal situation, a face to face fighting was not possible. The Nagas could only conduct a guerrilla war. The successful beginning of such a war was made by Kaito Sema. The other important development of 1956-60 was that educated Naga youngmen started joining the fighters. The foundation of the theoretical and ideological base of the Naga struggle was laid by Theo Sakhrei. All the written material about the Naga struggle before 1956 was prepared by Sakhrei. It was to him that Nehru had written a letter. The reason for his murder on orders of Zapuphizo has been mentioned earlier.

Sema youngmen had joined the Naga movement in good numbers. Sema villages were ruled by hereditary chiefs. Kaito was from a chief's family and was popular. Some Sema graduates also joined the movement.

The first graduate to do so was Mr. Scato Swu. Because of his ability he later became the President of the Naga Underground government. In the Federal Government of Nagaland, after Krisanisa, Scato Swu's role was central. The task of managing Naga fighters was beyond the capacity of Thongdi Chang. Because of his successful guerrilla tactics, the leadership of Naga fighters went to Kaito. He brought a good number of Sema youth with him. For them it was easy to take orders from a leader of their own tribe.

The Sema militants, on March 24, 1956, took captive 78 men of the Assam Police at Satakha village. Taking away their weapons the Nagas released them on humanitarian ground. Through them they sent a letter to the Indian Premier, Mr. Jawaharlal Nehru, asking for the release of Naga prisoners and a settlement of the political issue.

The Nagas neither beat nor tortured their captives. This was not part of Naga tradition. They were all released.

The elder brother of Kaito, Kughato Sukhai, became the prime minister of the Underground Naga government. Isak Swu, who is now the President of the NSCN (National Socialist Council of Nagalim), became the Foreign Secretary. Zuheto Sema, became a commander of the Naga fighters. They were all Sema.

Angami Nagas were the first to play a major role in the struggle. Kohima was the headquarters of the Naga country and later became the state capital. As headquarters, all government planning was done there, including administrative expansion and shemes to control the Nagas. Money for this came from Delhi. Some residents of Kohima and around started making money from government supply orders and contracts. Inspite

of the fighting, the town started becoming prosperous. The expanding administration needed educated men and women to work for it. They were recruited and given good jobs and salaries. People of other tribes too, more educated than the Angamis, like the Aos, began coming to Kohima for jobs. Youngmen of Angami villages like Khonoma however continued to join the Naga fighters, like Mowu, who later became the commander of the Naga Army. The new leadership of the Naga Army was neither directly connected with Zapuphizo nor named by him. He however remained the leader of the Naga movement in spite of living in far away London. But the business of day to day fighting was not in his hands. Newcomers had taken control of it.

After the India-Naga ceasefire of 1964 Naga politics took a new turn. In negotiations after the ceasefire the Nagas had to decide who on their behalf was to talk with Indian leaders, what were the issues to be discussed and who was to guide the negotiations. All this was done mostly by Semas.

Distrust of the Sema tribe among the Angamis surfaced. The cause of it was Zapuphizo. Mutual doubt and distrust prevailed among Naga tribes, because of their old hostility. Centuries ago, Nagas had come to this border of India from Burma in successive waves. Each succeeding wave either pushed or displaced the one that had come earlier. Had the British in the 19th century not stopped the new comers from pushing on farther, Nagas would have crossed the Hills and settled in the upper valley of the Brahmaputra river in Assam.

The Semas who may have come after the Aos, were better organized and united. Their advancing incoming waves were in the process of attacking the large Ao village of Lungkhum,

when British forces came and saved it from Sema occupation.

Even today Semas manage to set up new villages on vacant lands and are continuing their expansion in different areas. In Dimapur, in 30 years, the Semas have become the second largest population, after the Angamis. The Semas are extremely energetic. They expand in quiet, unobtrusive ways.

Zapuphizo was well aware of this expansionist tendency and therefore did not want to give the Semas a leading role in his campaign. But the Semas were not dependent on his mercy.

During the first peace talks with India in 1964-65, cracks began to appear in the Naga movement. In their struggle since 1955, Naga tribes had set aside their differences and come together in the fight against India. But when the ceasefire was declared in 1964, differences surfaced over who should lead in the talks with India. Zapuphizo was the main leader, but for eight years he'd been away, staying in Dacca and then in London. The day-to-day task of Naga struggle came into the hands of those who conducted it at home.

Before going abroad, Zapuphizo had made the aging Krisanisa of his village, Konoma, President of the Underground Naga government (the Federal Government of Nagaland, as it was called). He also made Thongdi Chang of Tuensang the commander of the Naga Homeguards, which were later taken into Kaito Sema's force (Naga Safeguards), to form the Naga army.

Krisanisa was a good person, but to conduct the affairs of the growing Underground movement, which was becoming increasingly complex, was a task beyond his capability. His influence was limited to his village and the surrounding area

and did not cover other tribes. He was a great scholar of interpreting dreams. A dictionary of dreams lived in his head. The Nagas were a people of oral tradition, and did not possess a script. The elderly among them knew how their previous generations had run their society, grew food and managed and conducted village affairs. Traditions were important. But very few knew the psychology of dreams and their meaning. Mr. Krisanisa was a leading figure in that field. I had heard him interpret dreams. But he did not live long after the ceasefire of 1964. With his death the dictionary of dreams disappeared. I was sorry that I had not made a beginning of writing down his stories and analysis. After his death I searched for someone like him who carried a storehouse of that knowledge in his head, but failed to find anyone.

That tradition of oral knowledge was lost. Today English-speaking Nagas make fun of it.

After leaving Naga country, Zapuphizo wrote letters to the British government, the United Nations and other international bodies complaining of India occupying Naga territory by force and administering it with brutality. For circulating such information he was looking for a safe refuge outside India from where he could contact countries and organizations to help the Nagas. Pakistan did not want to give him refuge for fear of trouble with India. If an office of a Naga organization came up there, it would become a point of another conflict between India and Pakistan.

Zapuphizo had promised his people while going away that he would get the Naga cause raised at the United Nations and other world bodies, would get and send weapons to those fighting at home. To bring his struggle to international attention

it was essential for him to live in a safe place outside India. In acquiring such a place, the British priest, Reverend Michael Scott, helped him. Scott had lived and worked in Mumbai and Kolkata as a priest of the Church of England. He had also spoken in the United Nations Assembly against South Africa's racist policy, as a member of an Indian government delegation. He had become well known as a human rights activist. He made efforts, through his office in London, to get British citizenship for Zapuphizo. His argument was that Zapuphizo was born in British-ruled Naga territory. He could no longer stay there because Indians would either put him in jail or kill him. The British government was responsible for his life and safety, and so he should be given British citizenship.

To ask for citizenship he had to go to England. In Pakistan a passport of some South American country was bought for him to travel. With that he arrived in Switzerland. Rev. Michael Scott went there to meet him and took him to London where an application for British citizenship was made, which was quickly accepted. Zapuphizo thus got a place of his own at Rev. Michael Scott's offices on Vauxhall Bridge Road in London. From there he went to New York several times for raising the Naga issue at the United Nations. In New York his sister's son, Mr. Iralu, worked as a chemist in an American Pharmaceutical Company. After much effort, either Panama or some other Latin American country raised the Naga issue once at the United Nations. At that time a leader of the Khasi tribe of Assam, Mrs. Khongmen, was among Indian delegates, attending the U.N. session, led by Mr. Krishna Menon. There she spoke as a Naga, though she was a Khasi, and said in Naga country "there is neither a war of independence nor

any violation of human rights committed by the Indian army." Mrs. Khongmen was dressed in her Khasi tribal costume and was taken for a Naga. Representatives of the other countries in the General Assembly took her and her statement as genuine and dismissed the motion.

Whenever skirmishes took place between the Indian army and Naga militants, questions were raised in Indian Parliament about the whereabouts of Zapuphizo. The reply from the official side always was, "There has been no news of him for some time. Perhaps he is dead."

After dying many deaths in Indian Parliament and in newspapers, Zapuphizo suddenly surfaced in London and began issuing statements there. Delhi was worried that he may raise the issue at international forums and slander India and its Nagaland policy.

Right then, in 1960, when the Naga People's Convention put forth its demand for a separate Naga state, Nehru talked to Naga leaders in Delhi and finally accepted their demand. The thinking behind this acceptance seemed to be that if Zapuphizo raised the issue of Naga struggle at an international level, it could be said that the Nagas wanted a separate state of their own, which had been given. Now whatever was happening in Nagaland was in accordance with the wishes of the Nagas.

Zapuphizo had gone to East Pakistan from Kohima and from there to London. Kaito, the leader of the Naga fighters, went a few times to East Pakistan to obtain arms, and once to London from there to meet Zapuphizo. He held long talks with him, the gist of which was that he, Zapuphizo, had been unsuccessful in fulfilling his promise to the Naga people. He had left to raise the Naga issue at international forums, and

get external assistance and weapons for his struggle. He had neither been able to bring up the issue at international level nor procure external assistance. Zapuphizo was not happy hearing these charges but was unable to take steps against Kaito. After Kaito, in the Naga army, a relative of Zapuphizo, of Khonoma village, Mowu, was the second in Command. Zapuphizo waited for Mowu to become the chief of the Naga Army.

After becoming the chief of the Naga Army, Mowu and his men were caught by the Indian army when they were returning from China bringing arms. In this task Sema militants helped India.

The success of efforts to procure arms from China and create a route to bring them was the result of the work of Sema leaders. The first Naga army group, under the command of an Angami officer, Thinuselie, went to Yunnan, in southeast China, after a long difficult march on foot. But Zapuphizo had no hand in the plan to procure arms from China. He remained in London where political and Christian leaders of the Western world did not want him to make contacts with Communists. He was indirectly told that if he opened contacts with Communists, England and other countries of the West would stop supporting him.

Zapuphizo had grown old. He wanted to be the sole leader of the Nagas, but living in London, nine thousand kilometers away from home, that was not possible. He could not direct his movement from such a far distance.

When the ceasefire between India and Nagas came about in 1964 and both parties began talks at the Prime Ministerial level in 1966, supporters of Zapuphizo believed that those talks should be held under his leadership. At that time the

prime minister of the Underground Naga government was Mr. Kughato Sukhai, elder brother of Kaito. The talks were between Prime Ministers. Nagas could give the leadership of their delegation to Zapuphizo, but some leaders of the Underground did not want this, chief among them were the Semas. In London, Zapuphizo was hinting that Naga leaders holding the talks were unfamiliar with negotiations and with the international situation. They had no idea, he believed, what should and should not be said at the Delhi talks. Lacking this knowledge, talks with Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, would not succeed. "Give me the task of leading and directing the talks and these would then move in the right direction", seemed to be his contention, which he did not make public.

For initiating the talks with the Prime Minister and to keep them going I was working with the Assam Chief Minister, Mr. Bimla Prasad Chaliha, who was a member of the Nagaland Peace Mission. The first talks had began at Chidema, a village five kilometers from Kohima. At first India sent its delegation under the leadership of its Foreign Secretary, Mr. Y.D. Gundevia. The Naga leader at these talks was an "Aang" (a Naga leader equivalent to Governor), Mr. Jassie Hurrey.

In 1964, before the ceasefire, cracks had appeared in Naga politics, though these were not visible from outside. The Semas were in the Naga army in large numbers. At the time of the ceasefire, Mr. Scato Swu was the President of the Underground Naga government, Mr. Kughato Sukhai, the Prime Minister, Mr. Kaito, Defence Minister, Mr. Isak Swu, Foreign Secretary, and Zuheto, the Deputy Chief of the Naga Army. The first Naga delegation set up for talks with India was led by Jassie Hurrey of the Chakasang tribe, and his deputies were, Mr. Isak Swu and Brigadier Thinusilei Medom.

After two years, when the talks with the Foreign Secretary, Mr. Gundevia, made no progress, it was decided to raise them to a political or ministerial level. A leader of Naga talks at that time was Mr. Kughato Sukhai, the prime minister of the Underground Naga government, a Sema. Backing the talks was Mr. Scato Swu, President of the Naga Underground government. This leadership had come up after Zapuphizo had gone out of Naga country. Krisanisa Angami, appointed President by Zapuphizo, lacked capacity and did not know English language. He had been replaced.

Angamis were one of the main elements in the fighting and the primary force of Zapuphizo's campaign. In eight years of fighting, other tribes had joined in. Kohima was the heartland of the Angami region and the capital of the Naga area. In 1957 the Naga Hills District was separated from Assam and was joined with Tuensang Frontier Division of NEFA, to create the Naga Hills-Tuensang Area unit, placed, directly under Delhi rule. The headquarters of the new unit was Kohima. Educated Angamis began joining the government, because tempting jobs were offered. These provided good salary, houses to live, vehicles to travel and attendants. Altogether these promised a good life!

The government wanted educated Nagas to be in the administration, so that it could claim that the fighting was between the educated Nagas and the uneducated ones who carried guns and hid in forests. With Nagas in the administration it could be said that the Nagas were governing themselves. But in reality the administration was directed from Delhi and by the army, which was in control of security. The Indian government had passed the Armed Forces Maintenance of Public Order

Act which gave powers of arrest and detention to the army. If the army killed innocent Nagas and tortured others, no action could be taken against it. It had powers of search and arrest. To this day this black law continues in operation in the Northeast.

Recruitments to the Naga police battalions began in 1961, when Naga judges, administrators, district and sub divisional officers were also appointed. They carried out army orders. The administration had a Naga face but the powers were in the hands of the army and Delhi.

A few years before the ceasefire, another large Naga tribe joined the fight. This was the Tangkhul tribe, living in the hills of northeast Manipur, on the border of Burma. It had many educated and politically conscious persons. The Tankhuls lived in Ukhrul district of Manipur state. In the beginning the Naga struggle was limited to the Naga Hills District of Assam only. Then it spread to Tuensang, and then in the 'sixties to all Naga areas of Manipur, from Mao, Senapati, to Ukhrul, Tamenglang and Chandel districts. Its leaders were Tangkhul Nagas of Ukhrul district and the most prominent among them was Mr. Rungsung Suisa. He was not only respected by the Nagas but also by Meiteis of Manipur valley and his writ ran over a wide area. In 1957 he was elected to the Lok Sabha, Indian Parliament's Lower House, from Outer Manipur constituency. A number of Vaishnavite Meiteis (Hindu Manipuris) also lived in that area. The Kukis tribe too lived there, which was a part of the Chin tribal people of Myanmar (Burma). All tribes there, Nagas, Kukis and Meiteis voted for Mr. Suisa (whom everybody called Uncle Suisa, in respect). Mr. Suisa wanted all Naga areas to be placed together. His effort was to prevent unfair treatment

to anyone in an agreement to be reached between India and Nagas. He asked the Nagas not to take any step which would harm the interest of India. And India was not to do anything to damage Naga interests. Both were to support the interests of one another. For the crime of saying this, Delhi government locked him up in Dum Dum jail of Kolkata. The last years of his tenure as Indian Parliament's Lower House member were spent in prison. No case was registered against him. Leaders in Delhi could not stomach his idea that Nagas and the Indians were equal. Mr. Suisa was not talking of total independence of Nagas. He had contested the election to Indian Parliament and taken an oath to uphold Indian sovereignty. But he felt that the policies Delhi was following in Naga areas were extra-legal, harming the Naga society and its self-respect. He was the first leader to tell Nagas to make it clear in their minds the purpose of their struggle and then proceed. They should understand the meaning of independence and then think of the kind of relations they wanted to have with India.

By putting him in jail, the Indian government declared him suspect. He did not contest elections again. The struggle of his people became his main cause. With him, the Tangkhuls joined the Naga struggle.

In 1963, when Nagaland state was created, Nagas of Manipur were not included in it, though they wanted to. Tangkhuls and others around then began participating in the Naga struggle. Educated Tangkhuls joined the movement in large numbers.

Zapuphizo's struggle was limited to the Nagas Hills and Tuensang only. The Tangkhuls and other Nagas of Manipur expanded the area of that struggle. The Naga region of Burma

had links with Indian Nagas. The dividing line between India and Naga areas of Burma was drawn by the British on paper only and not on the ground. After over two centuries it is still not on the ground. Followers of a Burmese Naga leader of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland, Mr. Khaplang, live in India.

Educated Tangkhuls came into the Naga movement in large numbers and they soon changed its size and character. After the murder of T. Sakhrei in 1957, the post of General Secretary of the Naga National Council remained vacant, and following the ceasefire of 1964, there was talk of filling it. In Viswema village of the southern Angamis, on the main road to Imphal, representatives of most Naga tribes gathered to fill the post through an election. Participating in it were about 2000 representatives of Konyak, Chang, Mao, Imchunggar, Meluri, Zeliangrong, Tangkhul, Angami, Ao, Chakasang, Sema, Lotha, and other Naga tribes, from near and far. I was at this election. This was the first instance of filling a post in the organization through an open election. The vote was unanimous and the 32-year-old Thiuangaleng Muiva, a graduate of St. Anthony College of Shillong, was elected to it. This was the time of ceasefire. After eight to ten years of oppression and distress the Naga society was breathing in peace. The election made people happy. Muiva belonged to the Tangkhul tribe and was a successor to Uncle Suisa. The Nagas of Manipur had greatly expanded the area of the struggle.

When Muiva was studying in Shillong I was the Northeast correspondent of *The Times of India* there. In his student days he was of a very cheerful and friendly person. Thirty years of hard life and struggle had made him somewhat wary, difficult

and harsh. Discipline is imperative in a struggle and it perhaps hardens a person.

After the entry of Nagas of Manipur, the Naga struggle was no longer dependent on directions of Zapuphizo. The new, educated leadership studied each situation independently and took decisions in accordance with its needs. The Semas and other militants were already preparing their strategies and they and the Tangkhuls now began thinking of new ways of continuing the struggle. They needed new, lightweight weapons and explosives of greater power. Arms they had brought from East Pakistan were old, and not enough. Weapons seized from the Indian army and police were small in quantity. Prior to leaving the Naga country, Zapuphizo had promised he would not only seek political support from other countries but also weapons. But he was unsuccessful. No Western country would give him arms. He did not have the money to buy them in the open market, send them to East Pakistan and then on to Naga country.

Quite a lot of thought was given to the question of getting weapons. Only one solution presented itself: it was, to go to China for them.

Burmese Karen, Chin, Shan, Arakan and other people, and the Burmese Communist Party, fighting the Burmese army, were getting arms from China. The Nagas thought they should also try.

The task was difficult. There was no common border between China and Naga areas. China had no contact or relation with the Nagas. There was no telling if China would agree to give them arms. The nearest area of China was Yunnan, over 250 kilometers away from the land of the Nagas. Nagas did

not know the way to it. Forests in between were infested with leeches and filled with ferocious animals. There were military camps of the Burmese army and Burmese insurgents in the jungles. The Nagas' entry into this terrain was certainly going to be difficult. But they had to try.

After a good deal of thought, Kedage (President of the Underground Naga government), Scato Swu, wrote a letter to Chinese authorities introducing himself and the Naga struggle and asking them for help. Muiva was appointed the bearer of the letter, as Naga ambassador. Altogether 147 Naga fighters were selected, under the leadership of Brigadier Thinuselei, to go to China. They were to reach the frontier of Yunnan through the Kachin area of Burma. Small units had been dispatched earlier to know the track, avoid Burmese army camps and make arrangements to buy rice for the large Naga group passing thorough. A young friend of mine, Major Magovor of Khonoma, had gone to make a preliminary survey of the route.

These tasks were not carried out under the guidance of Zapuphizo. These were initiated by the Sema and Tangkhul leadership. Among the Angamis, 'Brigadier' Thinuselei did take part but the thinking was not of Angamis. New weapons were necessary and to get them going to China had become urgent. The responsibility of negotiating peace with the Indian government was also in the hands of the Sema and Tankhul leaders.

Then Zapuphizo began telling his fellow Angami and trustworthy Ao leaders such as Imkogmeren (Vice-President of the Naga National Council) that for carrying on negotiations with the Indian government the Semas were neither clever

nor capable. They should be relieved of that responsibility. A member of the Peace Mission, Reverend Michael Scott, who had come to India on behalf of Zapuphizo, also thought the same. He too wanted the process of negotiating peace with India to be placed in the hands of Zapuphizo.

If the Naga delegation had wanted to, it could have said to Delhi that henceforth Zapuphizo would be the leader of the Nagas to the peace talks. But at no time during their visits to Delhi did they say so.

The Nagas did not ask Zapuphizo to return from London. In Naga country his family and some Angamis were clamouring for that. In Kohima Sema leaders began being boycotted. The nieces of Zapuphizo, who took care of Rev. Michael Scott, began keeping the Semas away from the Mission Compound. Sema leaders too stopped visiting it. Disagreement arose in the Underground.

It was decided then that some leaders of the Underground should go to confer with Zapuphizo in London, and bring instructions from him on how to conduct the Delhi negotiations and other matters.

Zapuphizo wanted to keep control over all aspects of Naga movement. The first official level of peace talks in 1964 were led by Mr. Jassie Hurrey, the Underground Governor, of Chakasang tribe.

The Underground Naga leadership which held talks with India never asked Zapuphizo to come to India and assume leadership of that task. But some of his colleagues, such as the aging Vice-President, Mr. Imkongmeren Ao, and Reverend Michael Scott of the Peace Mission were informally demanding that role for him. They wanted the Indian High Commissioner

in Britain to give "safe conduct" to Zapuphizo so that he would not be arrested when he came to Nagaland. Zapuphizo had become a citizen of Britain in 1960. Unofficially the Indian team of the Foreign Secretary, Mr. Gundevia, was saying that Zapuphizo was welcome back and he could come the way he had left. It was not a serious answer because in 1966 he had left Nagaland secretly, avoiding Indian Security Forces. For the talks he wanted to come openly. Rev. Michael Scott was asking for his return consistently and Zapuphizo's family too kept demanding a "safe conduct" for him to come. In the Angami area of Kohima, family members of Zapuphizo were quite influential. The Underground representation at talks with India was to be decided by its President, Mr. Scato Swu, Prime Minister, Mr. Kughato Sukhei, Foreign Secretary, Mr. Isak Swu, the former chief of the Naga army, Mr. Kaito, and a few others. Some were unhappy with Zapuphizo's failure in obtaining help from countries abroad. They knew the nature of Zapuphizo, who considered himself the leader of all Nagas. His style was to ignore the views of others and persist with his own. When I had talks with the Underground Prime Minister, Mr. Kughato Sukhai, to ask him about Mr. Zapuphizo's coming from London, he said, "You know his ways. If he comes he will say 'all negotiations with the Indian government until now were wrong! From now on I shall conduct them, in the right way!' Let us make some progress with the Indian government (Mr. Kughato was the leader of the Naga negotiating team) and then we shall consider calling Zapuphizo, at the right time."

However, the Naga negotiating team was not, for the time being, in favour of calling him back.

For this reason, the family members of Zapuphizo, his supporters and Rev. Michael Scott, were unhappy, almost

angry, with the Underground leadership. The most powerful figure among the Semas was Kaito, the former commander of the Naga army. Kaito became the defence minister of the Underground. But unhappy with the underground policy of the time he resigned.

Though Kaito never made his feelings public, Underground leaders knew that he had not the least confidence in Zapuphizo and his style. All tribes had fighters in the Naga army but not in such large number as Semas and Angamis.

The Naga campaign was for obtaining freedom from India. When talks began with India, many Nagas were filled with the hope that a settlement will be possible. They thought, if they did not get full independence, they will surely be allowed to have control over protecting their land, traditions, customs and way of life. With India their relations would remain of trade, use of its currency and maintaining communications and India would help in the task looking after administration (what India calls 'subjects of the union' in its Constitution.)

India was not able to give a definite direction to the talks. The Prime Minister and her advisors continued the talks in the hope that at some stage Nagas would on their own say that they wanted full freedom to run their traditional way of life and customs within the overall control of the Indian union.

Because of dissension among the Naga leaders and their resistance to Zapuphizo's leadership, the Naga delegation was unable to ask in clear terms which areas of governance they would like to have exclusively to themselves. They had declared they wanted independence and sovereignty. From feeling of pride and self-respect they said they had nothing to ask of India, except coming to an agreement on the nature of

relationship between the two. The Indian Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, said that by staying in India everything was possible for them.

In a roundabout way, without being direct, the Naga leaders were asking: "make it clear what you want to give us!" In the rigmarole of "you tell us first" and "no, you should do that first", the talks made no headway. Mrs. Indira Gandhi kept saying "by staying in India you will have full independence to run your society in accordance with your customs and traditions. You will have full freedom to develop the way you want, and Delhi will give you all help in that. The services you may not be running will be communications, currency, roads, hospitals and security, which will be managed by India, in full cooperation with you."

The main argument of the Nagas was—and remained—"We have always been independent. To safeguard that we are fighting. What can you give us to maintain that status?" Even when they wished to go farther, they could not find the key to break the deadlock.

One key was found by uncle Rungsung Suisa. From 1964 when the talks with India began, he stayed in Chidema village as advisor to the Underground. The Anagamis are difficult and not very tolerant people. Perhaps they could not accept the presence of a Tangkhul leader in their midst, helping them in reaching a settlement. They recognized only Zapuphizo as their leader. Their thinking was that only an Angami would be able to present a solution, and no one else. Sensing this animosity the aging Suisa left Chidema and went to live in Dimapur, and from there advised the Nagas on talks with India.

The talks got bogged down because the Underground leadership could not decide the question of placing the

leadership in the hands of Zapuphizo. The Indian leadership took full advantage of Naga differences on this issue. It went back to its former position of winning over Naga leaders to its point of view.

The tasks of fighting, carrying on talks with India and making contacts with Burma and China came into the hands of the Sema Nagas. Angami Zapuphizo, could not be the leader of the Semas. The problem before Zapuphizo was how to do away with the leadership of the Semas. It was propagated from Kohima that Semas were not a resolute and reliable people. They were liable to compromise in their self-interest. This was a distortion of Sema character. The truth was that the Semas weighed a situation and then decided what to do to deal with it. In unfavourable circumstances they did not become obdurate. They remained resilient to protect their interests and accepted some compromise at times. Among the Angamis such resilience did not exist. They stuck to their stand whatever the odds. When the British came with their army to seize their lands, for years they trusted that their spears were the best weapons, fought with them, and kept getting killed by British guns. They believed that spears had the power to pierce through anything. After fighting for half a decade and losing many people, they realized that guns were necessary. Only then did they set about buying them from Cachar and Bengal. But by then it was too late.

The Angamis had an advantage in having Kohima as the administrative headquarters of the region or state. The second advantage they obtained later was having Mowu, a Kinsman of Zapuphizo, become the commander of the Naga army, after Kaito. When he took command, the Naga army was not seeing

eye-to-eye with the Naga leadership holding talks with India. He then began acting on his own.

On February 16, 1966, the eve of the Naga team's first visit to Delhi for negotiations, a unit of the Naga army under Mowu's directions, set off bombs in the 3 Up Assam Mail, between the railway stations of Farkating and Kamar Bandha Ali, in Shibsagar district of Assam, killing 38 and wounding 52 passengers. This was an open attack of Naga army on its political leadership which had just reached Delhi for negotiations. Isak Swu, the Foreign Secretary, who was taking a morning walk with me, read of the bomb attack in the papers and was dumb founded. At the very beginning of the first talks with the Indian Prime Minister, a section of the Naga army was opposing its topmost leaders. In the negotiating team that had arrived in Delhi was the ageing Naga National Council Vice-President, Mr. Imkongmeren Ao, along with Prime Minister, Mr. Kughato Sukhai, Foreign Secretary, Mr. Isak Swu, an assistant to the Peace Mission, Mr. Choley Chasey, and Secretary to the Naga Underground Prime Minister, Mr. S. Angam.

In addition to humiliating its leaders, the Naga army was belittling the importance of the peace talks. The bomb attack was carried out by officers of the Ao Underground, who operated in that area of Nagaland-Assam border.

This was one in a series of bomb attacks on trains passing through Assam, killing innocent passengers. Earlier, on 23 July, 1965, the Underground had derailed the 3 Up Assam Mail at Selenghat in Shibsagar district. Then, on November 29, 1965, Nagas had fired on the 27 Up Passenger train. Two more attempts to derail trains had been made. One was at Dhansiri station near Dimapur, where, on February 9, some 19 feet of rail

track had been blown up. The Nagas after blowing up the track went towards Kherawadi, a village of the Kachari people, where they ran into men of the Assam Police. In a skirmish with the police a bullet hit one of the Nagas. The enraged Nagas then set fire to the whole of Kherawadi village. On February 10, the railway track between Dhansiri and Kherawadi was blown up by hand grenades which derailed two coaches of a goods train. On March, 23, 1966, in an attack, 32 coaches of a goods train were derailed between Nagajaan and Chunjaan stations. Thirteen coaches were totally wrecked.

In January 1966, a letter from the Naga Army Chief, Mowu Angami, to Brigadier Somamo, was intercepted. In it he asked the latter to send some selected militants for blowing up railway tracks and bridges.

In Assam, the railway line runs along the border of Nagaland but outside it, and barring Dimapur, does not fall within the ceasefire area. Some members of the Naga army held that they were free to carry out their sabotage activities outside the ceasefire area, in the same way the Indian army was free to arrest Nagas while they were near the international border, just outside the ceasefire area.. Many incidents took place after this in which suspicious-looking boxes were seen being loaded by Nagas on trains. At places the Naga army also uprooted rail tracks.

The most fearful explosion was set off by them at the railway station of Lumding on 20 April, 1966. The 20 Down Tinsukia-New Jalpaiguri Passenger, overcrowded, was standing at Lumding station. In one of its crowded third class compartments a powerful bomb exploded, killing 55 and injuring 120. Earlier, on 23 April, a bomb blew up in

a train standing at Diphu station, in which forty passengers were killed and eighty injured. Hearing of these explosions, I left for Lumding and Diphu immediately. I have seen people killed in wars in Algeria, Vietnam, Cambodia, etc. But none of the scenes there were as gruesome and horrifying as those of Diphu and Lumding. Torn parts of bodies were hanging from branches of trees around. Some were on roofs of the railway station and houses nearby. A severed bloodied face was looking at us with wide open eyes from a tree branch. A hand below a blood-soaked elbow swang in the air from a roof-top. A leg lay beside the rail track. Large pieces of flesh were strewn all over.

Over two hundred people died in these train explosions. The Home Minister of the Naga Underground, Jerenkoba, an Ao, made a statement saying his group was against these attacks and condemned them strongly. The political leadership of the Nagas said they were not behind the explosions. Under Mowu's command, the Naga army was attacking not just India but its own leaders talking to the Indian leadership.

The explosions cost the Peace Mission dearly. Members of the Assam Legislative Assembly severely criticized their Chief Minister Chaliha. The charge was that Chaliha was talking peace with Nagas who were setting off bombs in trains in Assam, killing innocent people. How could Chaliha be engaged in this kind of activity?

Extremely hurt, Chaliha resigned from the Peace Mission, the prestigious moral body established with hopes of stopping the conflict and bringing about a settlement. Chaliha expressed appreciation of the Naga leaders' statements condemning the explosions, but said he was sorry over their failure to stop their men from continuing to commit cowardly murders of rail

passengers. Chaliha said, 'How can I work for peace with those who are not able to stop their colleagues from such violent actions?' With his resignation, the Peace Mission came to an end.

On Peace Mission's coming to an end, a large public meeting was held in Kohima village on 28 May, in which the moral authority of the Nagas, Mr. Kevichuasa, expressed great sorrow over this blow to the hopes of his people.

General Mowu was not happy with the Semas' political leadership. If the leadership of the Delhi talks had been given to his kinsman, Zapuphizo, he would not have ordered attacks on trains.

General Mowu carried further his opposition to the Semas. He said he did not know what the Naga political leadership was saying in Delhi talks. It did not share that information with the Naga army. The Naga army, he said, would not budge from its goal of independence.

While this was going on, Zapuphizo's brother, Keviyalie, was sent to London to get directions. He came back in two months with no clear message for the Nagas on what they should do. To his own Angami people however his message was that the Naga team negotiating with Delhi, unaware of international situation, was committing blunders which were against Naga interests. It was to say that the Naga negotiating team going to Delhi for talks should be changed.

The repercussion of this secret message was witnessed at a session of top Underground leaders held in Chidema from June 25 to 27. The Naga negotiators had returned after their second meeting with Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in New Delhi. At this session, the Naga Prime Minister, Mr. Kughato

Sukhai, was accused of not presenting Naga demands to Delhi in a precise and forceful way. A demand to replace him as leader at negotiations was made. Mr. Kughato clarified the nature of his talks. It was finally decided that while he may lead the Naga team at the next round of Delhi talks, the members of his team would be chosen by the Naga Assembly (Ho-Ho), and not by him. The session failed to decide whether to call Zapuphizo over to take the leadership of talks with Delhi.

After this session, the Naga Foreign Secretary, a member of the negotiating team and its spokesman, Isak Swu, was dropped from the team. He was the right-hand man of Mr. Kughato Sukhai at the talks.

Zapuphizo had possibly asked protestant Christian organizations to raise the Naga issue at the international level. The American Baptist missionaries were the first Christians to come to Naga country, in 1894, and begin the work of preaching and converting the people. Because of their long tireless work in fields of education, health and religion, a very large number of Nagas had become Christian. There was continuing contact between the American Baptist organizations and the Naga church. When Zapuphizo set out to gather international support for the Naga cause, he must have gone to the American Bapatist organization familiar with his region. They may have given him some financial assistance, but were not ready to go against India to help the Naga political struggle. They did not want to be seen supporting a rebellion. If they did that, they were afraid they might provoke opposition to their worldwide activities of religious propagation and conversion.

Zapuphizo did not want to approach Communist countries which were helping struggles in East Asia. That would have

greatly displeased Christian organizations, America and the Western world. Christians were engaged in vigorous religious activities in Naga country. They held that Communists were immoral and enemies of Christianity. Zapuphizo did not have the courage to disregard his Christian supporters and go to Communists for help.

Twenty five years later, Naga fighters at home acquired the courage to go to China to ask for help and were successful in bringing arms from there.

Hoping for help from countries of the West and organizations opposed to communism, Zapuphizo breathed his list in London in 1990.

Eighty-five-year-old, Zapuphizo, had become a permanent resident of London. He had lost some of his contracts with Naga militants at home and his Naga National Council had become weak.

An agreement his brother, Keviyalie, had signed, with his support, with India, known as the Shillong Accord, could not be put into effect. Soon after the agreement was signed, a large and young group of his colleagues established an organization of their own, called the National Socialist Council of Nagalim (NSCN). They said the Shillong Accord was an abject surrender. If a surrender was to be made, then why did the Nagas fight for almost thirty years, from 1946 onwards, and why thousands of lives were sacrificed in that fight? Was the fight an act of foolishness?

The struggle brought about many changes in Naga society, but it did not fully free it of tribal differences. Zapuphizo was unsuccessful because of tribalism. Until the end he placed his trust in members of his family, his village and his tribe, the

Angamis. He did take in people from the other tribes in his struggle but did not fully trust them.

The Sema Nagas may not look as aggressive as the Angamis. But they are good in the art of drawing up military strategies and fighting. In the fifties, Zapuphizo was joined by Kughato Sukhai from a traditional Sema chief's family, and by Scato Swu, Isak Swu, and Kaito, the last with a good understanding of waging a guerrilla struggle. They mobilized people and brought new militants to the organization who fought bravely and increased the area of struggle.

CHAPTER 9

Fighting All Over Northeast

Taking their cue from Naga struggle, the peoples of the other areas of Northeast also began resorting to arms for solving their political problems.

The second large and important region to take to arms was the Lushai Hills district of Southern Assam, now a separate state of Mizoram. It adjoins Myanmar and Bangladesh.

All hill peoples of Assam—Garo, Khasi, Jaintia, Lushai, Karbi and so on—wanted to separate from Assam and have their own states. They formed a political party for the purpose—the All Party Hill Leaders' Conference.

During this period, 1958-1961, a big famine broke out in the Lushai Hills district. It has large forests of bamboo. Bamboo flowers once in twelve years. Its flowers are favourite food of rats which make them extra fertile and they breed profusely. Their increasing numbers attack standing crops in fields and also grain stored in homes and godowns. The rats being too many to be killed by human beings, get out of control. In 1960-61 an army of rats created a big famine in Lushai Hills. A separatist movement was already in operation in those hills. The famine gave it a boost. One of its leaders, Laldenga, formed a new party called the Mizo National Front, which withdrew from

the common struggle of the other hill peoples of Assam. It put up a demand for a separate independent state of its own—Mizoram. Other smaller tribes too were living in the Lushai Hills, but the Lushais or Mizos were the largest. They began calling themselves Mizo (Man) and demanded an independent country, like the Nagas. The Mizos belong to the Chin tribe of neighboring Burma or Myanmar. The British, after conquering the area, had made it a part of India, and let the neighbouring Chin area stay as part of Burma.

When famine—mautam in the Lushai language—struck in 1960, the Mizo National Front was first set up to provide relief. But soon it transformed itself into a political party, with independence as its aim. Famine relief workers created a well organized and popular party, with Laldenga as their President, who had in the Second World War served as a clerk in the British Indian army, and had also been a member of the Lushai District Council, a local autonomous body.

In 1963 he went to neighbouring East Pakistan for procuring arms, and was arrested on his way back. But was released as a result of the intervention of the Chief Minister of Assam, Mr. B.P. Chaliha.

The Naga struggle acted as an inspiration for him. His party wanted to get arms and training in fighting from the Nagas.

In Nagaland state a ceasefire was in operation then. Three members of the Mizo National Front came to Kohima in 1965. My mother-in-law, German Thangi, was a Mizo, whom my father-in-law had married in 1930, when he was the sub-divisional officer of Aijwal, the headquarters Lushai Hills. Because of this relationship, the three Mizos came to his house where I was living. There they came to know that

I was involved in peace efforts, for which I frequently met Underground Nagas. They also learnt that I was about to go to a Naga Underground camp on a hilltop across the river in Chajuba, to meet Naga leaders. They wanted me to take them along. I said, "I'll take you up to Chajuba and inform the Naga leaders about your wanting to see them." The next day I left them at Chajuba and went to the Naga camp which was at a tough climb of six or seven kilometers. I told the Nagas that some Mizo leaders had come to meet them and that I had left them at Chajuba. "You did the right thing by leaving them there!" they said. 'There's no telling what these Mizos might be up to. We'll send our men and find out who they are and what they want. When we launched our struggle for independence in 1956 and started fighting, Assam Regiment soldiers came from Shillong to suppress us. There were many Mizo soldiers among them and they killed innocent Nagas here. How can we trust the Mizos?" they asked.

The next day they sent some of their men to meet the Mizo leaders, and then themselves came over to Chajuba to see them, but did not invite them to their hilltop camp.

In this context, I wanted to relate a different story. When the first Naga delegation went to Yunnan in 1967 to seek arms and get training in their use from the Chinese, the Chinese authorities there did not know who they were and what they wanted. But after being allowed in, following questioning at the border, Chinese authorities interrogated them for many days to understand their background and the aims and objectives of their struggle. After hearing their account, the Chinese authorities said: "You have come to seek arms. We have no problem giving them. But arms don't fight by themselves. These are used by people who stand behind them. You want to

establish an independent state with the use of arms. But from what we understand, your population is too small and that of India very large. If you kill, let us say, a thousand Indian soldiers a day, India, with its population, can send two thousand every day to your area. Those soldiers do not have to do much but set up camps on hilltops and stay there to show that the hills are under their control. Whatever be the number of soldiers you kill, India can always send more. On your own, in our opinion, you cannot either change the situation or succeed in establishing an independent state. In our opinion you should associate other tribes and people in your neighbourhood with your struggle. With their joining, the area of fighting will expand. You will have difficulty to do that on your own."

In neighbouring northern Bengal at that time the Naxals or armed Communists had started fighting. China described this "spring thunder". The Chinese believed this fight would spread to other areas of India and could be successful. The people living near the Naga areas seemed ready to fight. They only needed to be brought together.

The Naga weapon seekers did not comprehend this reasoning. Their leader, Brigadier Thinuselei, said his instructions were to get and learn the use of arms and explosives and take them back. Involving his neighbouring people in the struggle and expanding the area of fighting was not within his competence. This was a political task. Those that came to Yunnan were only fighters, concerned with getting weapons and learning their use.

The Chinese then asked, who among the Naga leaders took decisions on political matters? Mainly Zapuphizo, living in London, they were told.

Was it not possible to go to London and put the question to Mr. Zapuphizo?

It was then decided to ask this question of Zapuphizo in person. Thereupon a Naga leader, perhaps Thinuselei himself, was sent with Chinese help to Brussels, where Zapuphizo came over from London to meet him. In London Zapuphizo was on firm, established ground politically with England and the West. He did not want to jeopardize this stable base of his by entering into an agreement with the Chinese. He said in reply to the Chinese queries about expanding the area of conflict, that for years he had been living ten thousand kilometers away from his home. He had no exact knowledge of the situation back home or around it. He did not know if the people in neighbouring areas of the Nagas would be willing to unite to fight against India and whether expanding the area of struggle was possible.

On hearing this, China felt that Zapuphizo and the Nagas were not ready to widen the area of conflict and wanted to keep it limited to themselves.

Afterwards, in 1980, another, newly formed Naga organization, the National Socialist Council of Nagalim (NSCN), was set up. It did give training in the use of weapons to neighbouring people. It also gave them arms, and formed relations with them. Soon there was no area around that was not receiving help from Nagas. But the NSCN did not include any other tribe or people in its struggle. It gave others arms and training and formed relations with them, but did not take them into a joint struggle, the way the Chinese wanted them to. But from Manipur to Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Tripura, Meghalaya and even north Bengal there was no region with

whose militants the NSCN did not establish contact. Several attacks, including those by the Nagas themselves, were launched in the Northeast on Indian forces by the Meities of the Imphal valley, the Bodos of lower Assam, the people of Meghalaya, the Mizos and the people of Tripura.

From among these, the Mizo National Front ended its armed struggle on June 30, 1986, when it got its own separate state of Mizoram in India. In the hills of Manipur the Nagas started fighting and in Imphal valley they gave help to the United National Liberation Front of Manipur and other militant organizations like the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA), the Achik Liberation Matgrik Army and the Khasi Hinyubtrape Achik Liberation Council of Meghalaya, the All Arunachal Pradesh Students' Union, the All Tripura Tribal Force, and the Bodo Security Force. Inspite of this aid given by the NSCN, these fights did not combine into a common struggle. Just as it had been for Nagas, Bangladesh became the refuge for all these militant groups. In Tibet region of China, Lhasa also became the route for the supply of arms for some groups. But for some years now, China has not been as encouraging and friendly with these groups as before.

For procuring arms these groups do not have to go to China now. Large quantities of arms and explosives of the Indochina war, are now available in neighbouring Myanmar. Arms dealers have also been loading them on small ships and boats and bringing them for sale in the Bay of Bengal and the Indian Ocean. It is no longer necessary for militants to go all the way to China to get arms.

Because the various struggles in the Northeast could not be brought together to form a common fight, their leadership

remained regional and differences came up between them in their strategy and aims.

The militants of Manipur do not want the Nagas living in the hill area to join the state of Nagaland or Nagalim. ULFA, the militant organization of Assam, is unhappy with the Naga NSCN for signing a ceasefire agreement with the Indian government while ULFA was fighting for an independent Assam. The Naga talks with India have been going on for over ten long years now. The ULFA describes the Nagas as an elephant caught in a bog, unable to move forward or step back.

The Nagas of Tirap and Changlang in Arunachal are in a quandary over whom to heed: the NSCN or the state government set up there by India. They seem to tilt towards the state government for the time being.

If the NSCN comes to an agreement with the Government of India, the instability in Northeast will decrease considerably. The NSCN is the biggest and most powerful formation in the area. The Nagas were the first to take up arms. Others took them up later. If the NSCN comes to a settlement with the Indian government, that would have its impact on other struggles around. Not that an agreement with the Nagas will lead to a settlement with others fighting in the Northeast. But the conflict will start diminishing.

The basic question is, what will be the relationship of these people with water, forests and land of their region? Will this relationship be decided by laws passed by the Indian government? Or will the people of the region themselves decide that this relationship should be the same as it used to be before? Or will leaders that will come up, assume powers to enact new

laws concerning water, forests and land in their areas? Now these resources are owned by the people.

The question will, one hopes, be decided by local societies. Delhi negotiations between the Prime Minister of India and the Naga team of Isak Swu and Th. Muiva, are making very slow progress. Because of opposition from Assam and Manipur over losing their Naga areas to Nagaland for the unification of all Naga territories, the Prime Minister of India is not able to say anything on the subject. Every time the Naga team meets him, he says he and his Government are in difficulty over accepting the demand of unification of all Naga territory. The main hurdle in this regard is the opposition of Manipur to giving away its hills where the Nagas live, which is almost four-fifths of Manipur's total area. If this area goes out of Manipur it will be left with only the Imphal valley, which will be too small to remain a state. The Manipuris, or Meities, as the people are called, are afraid of losing their statehood, if the Naga areas are taken away. Five of its districts, Mao, Chandel, Tamengong, Ukhrul, and Senapati, are inhabited mostly by Nagas.

To make the situation easier for the Prime Minister and the Government of India, the Naga team appears to have given up its demand to unite all Naga territory. It now wants the contiguous area of Tirap and Changlang districts of Arunachal Pradesh and the Naga districts of Manipur to be merged in the Naga state or Nagalim, and appears to have given up asking for Naga areas of Assam and Tripura. That makes it a little easier for the Government of India, because Assam does not have to oppose the merger of its Naga areas in another state. The Naga team is making it easier for the Prime Minister to settle the Naga problem.

Chapter 10

Who are the Nagas ?

From where have these tribes come, whom we—and now they themselves—call Nagas? Anthropologists have come up with many theories but no special research has been done on their origin. Anthropologists have not measured their skulls (cephalic index), nor done their blood grouping, to make comparisons and see whom they resemble most.

Professor John Hutton's surmise seems relatively good and plausible. Thousands of years ago, he says, the tail of Southeast Asia which now ends in Singapore, extended to Borneo, the next island, in a thin strip of land.

This whole region is dotted with volcanos, some of which are still active. A fearsome volcano or earthquake perhaps swallowed that thin tail. In the last century, an entire island, Krakatowa, disappeared in the sea when a big volcano in it erupted. The land link with Borneo in the east was a passage for people. Professor Hutton's view is that the tribes now collectively known as Nagas came from Borneo and slowly moved Northwest, setting up habitations along the way and then moving onwards, hunting and farming all the way. They thus reached the environs of the region we call the Naga area around the tenth century.

Borneo is the land of Dayak tribes. Its coastal people are fisher folk. Others, living on hills inland, practise slash and burn cultivation, like Nagas. When the soil loses its fertility they move further, doing the same kind of cultivation on new hill slopes. This is called shifting cultivation.

The peoples living on the hills of Borneo, (not the fisher folk of coastal area) are similar to Nagas in some respects. The men cut their hair in a similar circular manner. Their houses are made of bamboo and thatch, and the weave of bamboo fibres with which they make their baskets to carry on their back to transport things, is of the same design. Borneo people practised, until recently, raiding villages and bringing back heads of those they killed, which is followed by Nagas. Nagas love of cowrie shells shows that they were a people who once lived near the sea. Other similarities have been found, but the study is incomplete.

Some say the Nagas came from southeastern China.

People from several places have come and settled in India, especially in the Northeast. The Garos, the majority community of Meghalaya state, are reported to have come from Tibet. The second largest community of Meghalaya, the Khasis are of the Khmer family, and have come to India from Cambodia through Thailand. The Mizos are a branch of Chins of Burma, the Kachaaris are of Koch descent, whose empire stretched over northern Bengal and Assam until the seventeenth century.

Then there are people on both sides of the chain of mountains of upper Assam and northern Burma. Their early history is not clear. There is only folklore but it does not go too far back in the past. These people have been given the common name of Naga. None of them called themselves Naga before.

The word is not there in any of their thirty or so languages. They are not linked by dialect. Their physique and body build are different. No area or region of theirs was ever known as Nagaland. The word is of recent coinage. The people were unhappy with the name Naga for some time. Politics began bringing them together in the last century.

The tribes called Nagas have their own names. The name of the Aos was Avor. They were the first to come to the area of Chongli-Imtee. So many came there that living space became scarce. Some of them then set out in search of another place next door to live. To cross the river Dikhu, they made a cane suspension bridge. After sufficient numbers crossed the bridge to the other side, they destroyed it to prevent overcrowding of their new place. Those who crossed the river came to be called 'Avor', which means 'those gone away'.

Similarly, the people around Kohima, now called Angami, used to call themselves Tenemie. The Semas were Sumis, the Lothas were Kyons. Each tribe which settled in northwest Burma, Manipur, Naga Hills, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya and Upper Assam had its own name. Those in Manipur are called Tangkhul, Mao, Zeliangrong, etc, and those in Tirap in Arunachal Pradesh are called Tangsha, Wanchoo, Noktey. In neighbouring Burma are the Khimnugan, Tikir, Chir, Mokavarey. In Tuensang are Konyak, Chang and Fom. Groups living in a common area have united and taken new names, like the Zemi, Liangmai and Rongmai forming a group called Zeliangrong. Similarly, the Chakru, Kheja and Sangtam have joined themselves in the Chakesang group.

Where and which outsider gave these groups the name 'Naga' is not known. Perhaps the people of the plains of Burma

and Assam valley did it. In the Burmese language 'Naa' means 'those with pierced ears'. Among the hill people piercing ears was a prevalent custom. When a twelve year old boy entered adulthood, the family called a priest and a feast of pork and rice are given. The boy's ears were pierced ceremoniously and flowers were worn in the holes. After that they were accepted as warriors and allowed to take part in raids on other villages. The Burmese gave them the name 'Naga'. It was from the Burmese that the British came to know the name of these people as Naga. The British fought in Burma from 1795 to 1826 and conquered it.

On the other side, the nearest neighbours of the Nagas were the people of the Assam valley. In the Assamese language the word for the 'naked' is 'Naga'. It was used for people living in hills and forests, wearing hardly any clothes.

In about a century, all these tribes, in their political battle for preserving their identity, have accepted the name 'Naga'. Today they say that whoever takes part in their battle of identity is a Naga. This has become the definition of the word.

All these tribes did not come to Assam hills together, at one time. They came in waves, one after the other. Of these, the Konyak, the Khimnugan, Chang, Fom, Sangtam, and Imchungad tribes live on both sides of the Indo-Burma border. Others, such as Aos, Lothas, Semas, Rengma, Angami and Chakesang came to the Naga Hills from Southeast later. The first place where they are reported to have settled was Khejakenoma in Mao area of Manipur. They branched out to other places from there. There is a big rock in Khejakenoma. Except for the Aos, these settlers consider this as their mother rock, or place of origin. It is said that the first to come from

there were the Lothas, then came the Semas, the Rengmas, Angamis and Chakesang. The Aos consider the six stones of Longtrak as their place of origin.

Although their languages are different there are similarities in their social set up. The communities are small, existing side by side. All of them have a democratic base. They believe in collective defence and democratic administration of their villages.

What was the traditional set up of a Naga village a hundred years ago?

I will leave aside the Angamis, the most democratic of the Naga tribes and their social set up and write about another large tribe of Aos, to the north. They have two levels of administration. The basic one is a committee for village organization, with a fixed term or tenure for its members. In some villages the tenure is three years, in others five and even seven. When the term of office of one committee expires, the next is chosen. They do not have village chiefs. Only the Semas, the Konyaks and some others have them. The Chiefs can be replaced if they are unjust or autocratic.

Village populations are divided in age groups, each having its own leader. There is a three-year age difference between the groups. Every entrant into a group stayed in it until death. Girls have their own groups. But after marriage they go away to another family or village and leave their group. Being part of a group does not carry the same significance for them as it does for boys. The first group is made up of boys 12 to 14 years of age. This was known as the immature group. Its members serve or wait on members of older age groups and perform tasks given to them.

All groups live in a large community house called Morung, made of bamboo mat walls and thatch roof. Morungs still exist in some villages. Morung is like a school where the elders gave the young lessons in the art of living, their duty and responsibility to the village and community, public service, rules and laws, ethics, farming, wrestling, archery, hunting, defence, methods of attack in raids, other fighting skills and all the training one needs in life.

The first age group, whose members were called 'Saungyad', is set up in autumn, after the rains, when work on repairing village boundary walls has to be done along with other repair and restoration work needed after rain-damage. The group's job is also to get wood from the forest for cooking meals and waiting on senior groups.

After three years a new group of beginners comes in and the earlier group becomes senior. The senior is taught deeds of daring. On dark moonless nights its members are sent to cut bamboo from special spots in the depth of a forest. Neither torches nor weapons are given to it. Bamboo has to be cut with either a sharp stone or teeth. Sometimes a member of a group would be given a torch of burning twigs, told to go to a remote and dangerous area of the forest, put out the torch, leave it there and find his way back in the dark. The next morning young men are sent to the spot to verify that the one sent there the previous night did actually go there, put out the torch and leave it there. They then came back with the extinguished torch as a proof. Making the torches ready, cooking, art of defence, use of weapons, hunting, laying ambush and carrying out attacks are taught to this older group.

When this group graduates it has to cut and bring over big

tree trunks to give to the Morung as offerings. The tree trunks are stocked on both sides of Morung entrance for repair work. The remaining wood is split and used for cooking or keeping the community house warm in winter. The task of keeping paths clean, widening them and raising funds were also given to this group. Sleeping in the Morung is compulsory for the first and second group, until marriage. Others too could sleep in the morung if they did not wish to sleep in their homes.

After three years of training in defence and community tasks, the second group moves up to the third stage and became Morung leaders—Chuchenwori. After three years in this group, its members were entitled to get the legs of pigs killed, the best part of the meat. Then they became Okchang-shami-Chariwori, responsible for village defence and mounting attacks on enemy villages.

After that they became leaders—kidom momwara—leader of their respective clan. After fifteen years in village service they became middle aged and were counted among leaders of the village.

After three years in that position they became khoris, holding charge of supplying animals for sacrifice on special occasions, and were given a portion of the better part of meat reserved for group leaders. After that they formally became group leaders—Tataaris—entitled to biggest portions of meat of animals sacrificed. On the advice of groups senior to them, they looked after all tasks of village welfare and upkeep. After three years in this position they became senior leaders—Mavojavan Telakava (higher representatives)—but received smaller portions of meat. A few of them then became pateer or priests. This was their final designation or office. By then they

are deemed to have had enough experience and knowledge of administering the village. Villagers came to them for advice on important matters.

Girls were not required to be educated on so vast a scale. Skills like the use of weapons and fighting wars, sacrifice of animals and holy rites were not considered their domain.

In the Morung, in a comprehensive course or system of education, boys were taught discipline, running their lives, courage, self-defence, collective work, staying steadfast in difficulties and facing them bravely and taking decisions for the welfare of all in the village. Old timers say that when students were examined in above tasks and skills, they were made to stand over a fire and were not expected to moan in pain.

The Morung was a village in miniature. No outsider interfered in its affairs. If a father spoke or advised his son on life in Morung, he was fined. In the Morung there was a chief, (Ugrh). Under him were one deputy chief (Toglu), fourteen committee members (Tataar), two repair men (Tingyad) who knew building and restoration work, two cooking specialists (Ibutiyeys) in charge of making rice wine—a moderate intoxicant—and procuring food items for seasonal festivities. For settling disputes there was a committee of young men, which collected fines from families that had committed offences.

The Aos are divided in communities which speak Mongsin and Chongli languages. Both run Morungs, except that their ways differ a little.

Members of village committees have to leave office to make way for newcomers. Some members do not want to leave because the office gave them benefits, like a large portion of meat of animals killed to welcome special guests or bought

with fines imposed on the guilty. Sometimes disputes broke out over the tenure of office. But the tenure was fixed. In Mongsin villages it is six years, while among the Chongli it is five.

Funds were collected from people for community work, called Saaroo. After crops were gathered and brought home, all committee members assembled at a leader's house and prepared an account of expenses incurred on community welfare the previous year. Included in it was the cost of feasts for guests, animals killed and expenses incurred in the course of settlement of disputes. The cost was calculated in rice. Each householder's share was determined. The arrival of crops made it easy to pay one's dues. If the collection turned out to be large, the excess was used for feasts for assessors.

When the people converted to Christianity they began opposing the sharing of expenses of feasts for village guests.

I am unable to write about the social system of all Naga tribes, which are somewhat similar. I must however point out that their system of running their societies was destroyed systematically, first by the British and then by the Indian government. Some part of the story of the Indian government's role in wrecking their systems is referred to briefly in this book, but I will describe what the British did to destroy the Naga social order.

In the course of their long military campaigns from 1830 to 1880, the British began their propaganda of portraying the Naga tribes and their social system as backward. Naga deities were called powerless. Their laws, system of justice and administration were described harsh and unkind. Nagas raided villages and came back with heads to decorate their Morungs or Community homes and offer to gods of fields.

Their festivals were called barbaric. Their nudity described unbecoming. They were told to cover themselves up properly (in the Western style!). Their spears, shields, and bows and arrows were described poor weapons, incapable of making them win in fights. The drink they brew from fermented rice was described an example of their backwardness. Their food was called dirty and disgusting.

"Learn from us!" was the boastful advice given to them by the British rulers and Christian missionaries.

For propagation of Christianity schools were opened and churches set up. The first promise was that those who came to learn the new system of education would rise to a higher standard of living. Girls who went to Christian schools stopped working in fields. That work was conisdered beneath their dignity. Since there was no other work for them in villages, girls sat idle in their homes. Some said this led to immoral relations.

All Naga tribes worshipped memorial stones. Even today, in the village of Khejakenoma which falls in the Naga area of Manipur, is their first stone memorial. Most Naga tribes believe that it was from there that they went to live in different areas. Villages had stones that were sacred. These were considered as living souls. The Aos never spat near any large stone nor did they disturb peace by practicing shooting arrows near it. Stone pillars were erected where animals were sacrificed. Some soothsayers said they made correct predictions about crops and fortunes near such special stones. Villagers used to go out in search of large tall stones, brought them to set them up along paths.

Christian missionaries described the belief in stones as stupidity and denied their powers.

Sheltering a sacred stone in Varoyung village of Aos, there stood an old tree. Converted to Christianity by the American Baptist Mission, villagers cut down the tree. The wife of the first missionary in the area, Mrs. Clark, had written a century ago that young people who gave up the religion of their ancestors and became Christian, began desecrating and breaking that stone.

The sacred stone in Changchanglung, worshipped for centuries, was turned into a place for urinating and defecating by village youngmen who became Christian. It is said that Cheshta Kyungwa of Yachang village who was the first to do so, became mad within six months and began living below platforms outside the village meant for placing dead bodies on.

Some stones were pairs; husband and a wife stones. Of the six pillars in Lungtarok which the Aos consider their pillars of origin only three are left now. The biggest of them was called Shree (a Goddes perhaps?). A male-organ-shaped stone in front of it was broken by a Christian missionary before 1920.

Christian religion did all it could to destroy the virility of the Nagas.

To establish British rule, it was considered necessary to root out the old established order. After ruining the dignity and authority of their gods and goddesses, attacks were made on the office and power of village chiefs. Those too were destroyed.

Among western Rengmas, another Naga tribe, an outstanding individual was made the chief, called Kokhugu. His advisors were good and able men from other families. If the Kokhugu turned out to be willful and unsuitable, he was removed from office and replaced with another of ability,

from another Rengma group. In the beginning, this office was with the Tepinyu Rengma group, which was not friendly in general. After seven years this office was entrusted to a capable individual from the Kantanyu group, and then given to Khugja group. Acquiring land for agriculture, settling family disputes, maintaining rules and regulations, instructions on festivals, building relations with other villages were among the tasks of the leaders. They also had the right to destroy the house of anyone disobeying rules.

The British started putting an end to the authority of village leaders. They made them powerless and destroyed village unity. They set up their own centres of administration in big villages and courts of justice. Villagers could go to these courts with complaints against orders or decisions of their leaders. People began using the new institutions and ignoring their own. Becoming powerless, the system of village chiefs began to decline and die.

For example, village Chiefs used to decide who was to be the first to harvest a ripe crop. The British put an end to such traditional practices.

Villages were administered by their experienced elders. Each village had its own administrator who was independent. People of character and ability administered villages. It was essential for them to know their traditions and laws. In the absence of a script these laws were not written. Once broken, it was difficult, practically impossible, to reestablish them.

The process of breaking the Naga social system reached its climax in 1947, with the coming of Indian rule. As outsiders, Indian administrators were suspicious of the old system. Their understanding was that by converting the Nagas to

Christianity, the British had set them up against India. Their independent ways, therefore, had to be put down. To work in this border region officers recruited from police and army were sent as administrators. They were not familiar with geography, history and languages of the Nagas. They were arbitrary and did what they liked. They were unfriendly. The British had come here from across seas. This was not their land. Because of this, the British did not interfere too much in Naga life. After a few years of service, they went back to their country. Indian administrators were told that this border region was an inalienable part of their country, but the tribal people were unpatriotic. Indian administrators through material inducements, and, if necessary, punishments were to make these people patriotic. The Nagas were used to the power of their chiefs. How was India to introduce in their system a sense of patriotism?

Rulers in Delhi divided this region into administrative units arbitrarily. Those sent there to administer were told that the land belonged to India, though the people there did not consider themselves Indian. Their thinking had to be changed.

The land of Konyak, Chang, and some other Nagas, stretched into Myanmar, across the Indian border. Cross border marriages, trade and other transactions used to take place. The border between India and Myanmar was not marked on the ground. How could some Nagas be made patriotic to India? How were they to consider some of their own people across in Myanmar as outsiders or foreigners?

This remains the situation there even today. A Naga rebel leader, Khaplang, is from Myanmar. But he as well as his followers live on the Indian side. India allows Khaplang to set

up his armed camps in Nagaland state because Khaplang fights the Muiva group of Nagas of NSCN. The Indian government has accepted a ceasefire with this Khaplang group of Myanmar. The Khaplang group is now dependent on the Indian government's goodwill. Its only use is that it is committed to fight the NSCN, or the Muiva group.

Nagas of Myanmar keep coming over to Naga areas of India.

Let me narrate a story. The Indian Constitution gives full freedom to Nagas to follow their traditions and lead their life according to them. Gokeso Mayasachu of the famous Angami village of Khonoma had adopted me as his son some 35 years ago and made me a member of his community. A few months later, the Deputy Commissioner of Kohima, Major Mussadi Lal Kampani, wrote a letter to Mr. Gokeso, saying his act of adopting me was illegal. I was adopted according to the tradition of the Angami poeple, but Kampani did not know that tradition, yet he had the authority to declare the adoption illegal.

With his illegal order, Major Kampani, wanted to please the governor, Brajkumar Nehru, who, he knew was not happy with me. Major Kampani violated the Naga system of adoption by issuing a notice to Mr. Gokeso, to keep his superior, the governor, Brajkumar Nehru, happy. Nehru did not want me to remain in Nagaland. With illegal acts like that, Naga tradition was violated by Major Kampani. With such acts Major Kampani kept the Governor happy and managed to obtain the high post of Governor of the Andaman Islands. When he was serving in Nagaland he had taken a loan from the state government there, to build a house in Delhi. He then let out that house on high

rent to the Nagaland government, for the use of its officers coming to Delhi for meetings and other official work.

The first lesson in corruption was taught to Nagas by Indian officials. Thanks to this education, Nagaland is now one of the most corrupt states.

The Nagas had watched the Indian struggle for independence from their far area. No Indian leader ever came to ask the Nagas to participate in that struggle. The Nagas felt apprehensive about their future when the British left India. When the Simon Commission came to India in 1929, the Nagas had presented a memorandum to it requesting the British to let the Nagas stay as they were.

Chapter 11

British Conquest

Himalayan ranges stretching eastward take a forty-five degree turn to the south and their snow-covered heights begin to decrease after this turn. Moving southwards for a thousand kilometers, these ranges separate Myanmar from India and Bangladesh. Thereafter, progressively reducing in height, they reach the Bay of Bengal.

The flow of the rivers and valleys in these hills is also from north to south, which makes east to west or vice versa movement difficult. Heavy rains occur here from May to October, which make paths and bridges slippery and dangerous.

It is on these south-oriented, progressively lowering ranges that the Nagas live, in forests of oak, rhododendom and bamboo, and at places, pine and teak. In Naga region of Myanmar start thick teak forests. On heights are located villages and on slopes rice fields. Cultivation begins along river banks where irrigated terraces are made. These stretch up the hills to places where water is available for growing paddy. Paddy and millet are also grown on dry slopes, after clearing forests. A few years of heavy rain washes away the top soil of slopes and they lose their productivity. Villagers then cut another patch of forest nearby and start cultivating it. In five to ten years trees grow back on

the abandoned slope. Villagers then come and cut them and start to cultivate it again. This goes on in cycles and is called shifting cultivation or Jhoom. The cycle is of ten to 15 years.

Irrigated terraces are however never changed and are looked after with great care and love.

The speed with which forests grow back in this region of heavy rain is magical. One has to see it to believe.

How lovingly fields are tended can be seen in Naga Hills. Rice fields enclosing Khonoma village must be the most beautiful in the world. There is a species of oak here which the Angami Nagas cut at a height of ten to twelve feet. Every spring, long slender branches sprout from its cut trunk. These are cut and gathered for firewood in the winter. Next spring they grow back.

But these fields are insufficient to feed the five thousand people of Khonoma village. To meet its needs, Khonoma practises shifting or jhoom cultivation in forests around. Because of the scarcity of land to farm, hard-working Khonoma people have mastered the art of stone masonry and become the best in stone work. They are unrivalled and are known all over the region.

Some of its villagers became skilled traders. Until 1956, they used to visit neighbouring Myanmar and go as far west as Ankleshwar, in the Bay of Khambhata on the western coast of India, 3,000 kilometers away, to bring conch, coral, cowrie shells and cornelian and sell them in the Naga areas for jewellery. This enterprise has nearly died due to fighting in Naga Hills since 1956. All Naga women and some men as well wear necklaces made of these items. Without knowing a word of Hindi, Khonoma villagers used to travel all the way to Gujarat for these items.

I asked an elderly Naga trader: "What was the most strange thing you saw during these travels?"

He said, "I saw in Banaras a woman cutting grass with her scythe the whole day. Then she gathered it in bundles, carried them on her head and went to the market to sell it for cart horses!"

The perennially green Naga region of those days was not divided as it is now. And the peoples of the Northeast were not living in separate states. In 1826, the British routed the Burmese army and established their rule over Assam and Manipur, and later in Burma too. They divided the Naga region between India and Burma: two thirds in India and one third in Burma. After eleven military campaigns carried out between 1830 and 1880, the British established their rule in the Indian Naga region, which they named the Naga Hills District of Assam.

In Samaguting, which the Nagas have now named Chemokedima, the British constructed a fortress of logs for their troops and declared it the headquarters of the Naga Hills District. In 1878 this headquarter was shifted to Kohima, forty five miles up. For a short while it was also moved to the village of Okha, in the Lotha areas.

After driving out the Burmese army, the British recognized Gambhir Singh as the ruler (Raja or King) of Manipur, and in his kingdom of the river valley of Imphal, they placed Nagas areas to the north and northeast as his subjects.

The Naga region in North Cachar was then under the rule of Tularam Senapati, and later, when the British East India Company took control of it, it became British territory.

The British did not establish their rule over the Naga region of Burma, neither in Tuensang and Tirap, near the Tibetan border.

After independence, India created the North East Frontier Agency (NEFA) by joining Tuensang and Tirap areas to Kameng, Subansiri, Siang and Lohit Frontier Divisions, along that border. In 1957, after fighting broke out, the Naga Hills-Tuensang Area was created by joining the two regions, to be administered by the Centre. In 1963 this area was made the state of Nagaland. A lot of Nagas still remained outside that state.

In the beginning of the nineteenth century, upon the arrival of British in Assam, Nagas felt it may be their turn to be annexed. Driven by this fear they began attacking the British-controlled areas.

The British then called upon the ruler of Manipur, Raja Gambhir Singh, and Tularam Senapati of Cachar to stop the Naga attacks and if possible take the Naga areas under their control. Tularam excused himself from that task straightaway. He said he did not have the required strength and resources to round up Nagas and stop their attacks. Manipur too did not have that capacity, but in spite of it the Raja began attacks on Naga villages and gave full freedom to his troops to rob and loot villages. Manipur attacks made Nagas more apprehensive.

The Northeastern corner of Assam lies below the Naga Hills. There the first tea plantation was laid out in Sadia, by an Englishman, Bruce, in 1830. Tea flourished. Then more planters came from Britain and tea gardens and plantations covered much of Upper Assam and trading in tea began which is still going strong.

About the same time the British found coal deposits almost on the surface in nearby Margarita, and oil in Digboi. Coal was mined the oil drilled. To transport them, steamers began plying

on the Brahmaputra river and settlements of Englishmen and their workers grew in upper Assam.

It was near these settlements that weekly or seasonal markets were held, where Nagas came to sell ivory, hand-woven cloth and the produce of their forests and farms, and bought iron for their weapons and farm implements, salt and other needs. Their all-purpose broad-bladed Naga hatchet or dao was made from iron. It was used in farming, hunting, felling bamboo and making articles of daily use like spoons, bowls, seats, cutting hair and making bamboo walls for houses. It was the Nagas' main instrument and weapon.

Iron fencing had been put around tea plantations, coal mines, oil wells and settlements. The sight of so much iron lying around tempted the Nagas on their way to markets. At night they came and cut the fencing and carried it away. Sometimes they also cut the heads of a few labourers and took them.

The Nagas when they cleared jungles for new fields needed human heads to place there, as part of their offering. Christianity had not yet made inroads in the area. The people made offerings to their gods of nature, such as Rapu, Humadi and Rampao. It was not easy to attack and obtain heads from other Naga villages, which were vigilant and well guarded. But taking heads from settlements of labourers was not difficult. Severed heads were nailed to trees in new fields as offerings to the earth gods.

The British rulers got tired of these raids. Workers they brought from Andhra, Odissa and Bengal started running away.

Nine years after Bruce's first tea plantation at Sadia, in 1839, the British set up their first military camp at Sekowa, on

the eastern banks of the Brahmaputra river, to defend against Naga raids. By then several attacks had taken place. In one the Nagas burnt down an entire British settlement at Sadia. Thereupon a light infantry brigade was stationed at Sekowa. Its first commandant was John Butler, who later held many senior positions in East India Company in Assam and wrote an account of his tenure and thereby gained much fame.

Let us turn now to the first military campaign against the Nagas by the British of 1832. They had in it many soldiers from Manipur. After they had driven out the Burmese from Manipur, they recognized Gambhir Singh as the state's King or Raja, and also appointed a political officer at his capital, Imphal, complete with a large bodyguard of troops.

The British East India Company was not against the efforts of the Manipur Raja to capture and bring under his control the Naga area. Only it did not want Gambhir Singh to cross the Naga Hills and reach upper Assam to try to capture the kingdom of Raja Purandar Singh there, established by the British.

The Commissioner of Assam, Captain F. Jenkins, had clearly written in his report with R.B. Pembarton, that all hills between the Doyang and Dhansari rivers (which included the Naga area), be given to the kingdom of Manipur. In 1835, forests between these two rivers were recognized as the boundary between Assam and Manipur. But where exactly lay the boundary line was not clear.

Coming in from Bengal, the British took over the kingdom of Cachar, after the death of its ruler, Raja Govind Chand, on August 14, 1832. The raja had not left any heir. The commander of his army, Tularam, was ruling the hills of Cachar. Tularam

was the son of Kachadeen, who served food to Raja Govind Chand. Tularam himself had been an attendent of Raja Govind Chand. The Raja later sent Kachadeen to the hills of Northern Cachar on some errand. Putting down roots there, in 1813 Kachadeen rebelled against the Raja. The Raja called him over on some pretext and had him murdered.

Tularam wanted to avenge his father's death. With the help of the king of Burma he took control of northern Cachar. Raja Govind Chand was not able to drive him out inspite of many attempts. In 1828 Tularam made his cousin, Govindram, the commander of his forces, who ousted Raja Govind Chand's army from the hills. Govindram then ousted Tularam from the hills of northern Cachar, making him take shelter in neighbouring Jaintia Hills. In 1829 with the help of Manipur, Tularam routed Govindram. Govindram took refuge with Raja Govind Chand.

To restore peace in northern Cachar, the Governor General's agent, Scout, asked Raja Govind Chand to give Tularam control over a small part of the hills. After the death of the king, in punishment for the death of two British citizens, North Cachar region was reduced to 2,224 square kilometers in area but allowed to stay in Tularam's control.

The former King of Cachar, Krishan Chand, had made many attempts to take over Naga villages and lands but failed. He was defeated in the village of Birema by Nagas and his force had to run away, leaving behind a cannon that was capable of firing ten pound shots.

Despite these events, northern Cachar and the hill ranges of Manipur remained a part of the Naga region. Naga villages populated Manipur ranges and the dense forests of northern Cachar were their hunting grounds. After winter crops some

forests were cut and Nagas hunted elephants, wild boar and deer in cleared areas and collected ivory. Whenever possible, they also captured people of northern Cachar and sold them to Bengalis as slaves.

Two centuries before that, followers of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, a religious leader, had arrived in the flat, fertile valley of Manipur from Bengal and established the Hindu Vaishnav cult there. The Nagas of Zeliang, Rongmei and Lengmei tribes, after harvesting and filling their storehouses with paddy began learning the story of God Krishna from Shri Chaitanya's followers and were making it a part of their own folklore. They began dancing episodes of Krishna's life on moonlit nights. The waters of the Imphal river helped produce large paddy harvests in the valley. This prosperity along with the arrival of the Vaishnavite cult from Bengal divided the people of the valley from those of the hills. Prosperity created a Kingdom in the valley. The hills however stayed tribal following their old customs. The politics of the valley, fuelled by expansionist ambitions, led to attacks on the hills. Troops from the valley were beaten back by the hill people and did not succeed in subjugating them.

In 1853 the Manipur army attacked some villages of the Angami Nagas. The Nagas went to the British administration with a complaint. The political agent of the British lived in Manipur and the British could have advised the Manipur army not to attack Nagas in the hills. But the British replied that they could not advise Manipur on its relations with the Nagas. The Nagas were not under the protection of the British. Whatever happened in the Naga area, therefore, was of no concern of the British and they would not interfere in any way.

Then the British themselves infiltrated the hills. They launched their operation from the Manipur valley, and along with its Raja set out on their military campaigns for taking over the hills. The upshot of all this was that the conflict between the Raja of Manipur and the Nagas changed into Naga-British hostility.

Each military campaign by the British has its own detailed history and background. Beaten inspite of their enormous fire power, the British East India Company kept assessing the possibilities of making renewed attempts to establish control over the Naga hills.

Between Assam and Manipur stood hill ranges covered with forests in which lived many Naga tribes. The British thought it necessary to make a survey of the hills between Manipur, Cachar and Assam, and establish a route to Naga areas. For this military campaigns were considered necessary. There were other reasons too for these campaigns, which will be narrated later.

The first campaign took place in 1832. With 700 soldiers armed with rifles, and eight hundred porters, Captain Jenkins and Captain Pembarton set out from Manipur to Cachar to establish a route to Assam. All the territory on the way was Naga. Before the British campaign, the Raja of Manipur made frequent raids on Naga villages for robbing and land-grabbing. Whatever his soldiers could get was theirs.

Naga villages did not have a king. Each village was an independent republic, administered by village elders. Groups of villages fought the aggressors.

The Angami Nagas, in whose area this first military campaign was mounted, came to know that the British were

helping Manipur to conquer their land or take it for themselves. The Angamis villages united in opposition.

A British force that had set out in January 1832, reached Ramsa and Mohangjadua in Assam after twenty three days, passing through Sengmai, Mayang-Khang, Marmai, Papolongmai (Kenoma), Nirema, Samaguting (today's Chemokedema) and the river Dhansiri . The Nagas followed it all the way and fought with it at many spots with their spears, bows and arrows and shields. The Nagas were unfamiliar with guns. The campaign succeeded because of the power of the gun. The British forces killed many of the 400 families in Kenoma village.

During the rainy season that lasts six months, movement through forests becomes impossible. It could only be resumed in the dry weather of the next winter.

In the winter of 1833, Lieutenant Gordon carried out the second British campaign in the Angami Naga country, with troops of Manipur Raja Gambhir Singh. Again, it was only because of guns that the British were able to cross Naga hills.

The Nagas at that time frequently attacked Cachar, and took captives there. Traders from Dhaka, Sylhet and Bengal came to the Naga Hills in the winter months to buy ivory and strong hand-woven fabrics. They needed slaves for working in their homes. They incited the Nagas to capture people of Cachar and sell them. Because of this demand the Nagas started their slave trade.

In Naga Hills cotton was grown those days.

On January 5, 1839, northern Cachar was joined to Nowgong in Assam. E.R Grange was the assistant of the Commissioner of Assam in Nowgong district. (Assam was under

a Commissioner at that time.) Grange was given orders to go to the Angami country with a mixed force of fifty troops of the First Sebundi (which later became the Assam Light Infantry), the Cachar Levi of Gauhati, and a police militia stationed at Mohangdejua, and warn the Angamis that they should stop their attacks on Cachar. Grange reached Mohangdejua passing through Semkur, Berema, Velakoma, Muhwe, Terema, Takajenoma, Chirema, Rajafema, and Samaguting. His campaign that had started on January 11, ended on March 15. Nagas attacked at night and injured many soldiers of this huge force with their spears and arrows.

The fourth military campaign of the British in Naga territory began on December 3, 1839. In this expedition Grange took with him a Shan army unit of Burma and a militia unit from Jorhat. Setting out from Dimapur, Grange set up camp at Samaguting. Waving their spears in the air Nagas surrounded the camp and challenged it, saying, for Nagas their spears were their king and nothing else mattered to them. Then, they disappeared into the forest after injuring some guards.

In retaliation, the British took over the village grain stores and emptied them. Advancing towards Rajaphema they noticed a Naga group blocking their way, ready to fight. To get a place to rest near Mezoma, the British had to open fire and send the Nagas running away. Nagas placed sharp, pointed bamboo spikes along the path and injured many. At night they tried to burn the troops by setting fire to the dry grass in the jungle around. Later when the troops were crossing a narrow valley they rolled down boulders from the top and tried to crush them. Because of this fierce resistance, Grange on February 7 was forced to return. In spite of heavy gunfire of his troops and killing many Nagas he could not advance.

Carrying the injured back to Samagatung and leaving them there, on February 21, he took a different route and proceeded towards Jakhama village. Just a short distance ahead, the Nagas, hiding behind rocks flung spears at the British and injured many. Then they put poison grass in a water source. Grange had to turn back again and to keep his retreat safe, he took some Nagas of Samaguting as hostage, to deter Naga warriors from attacking him and his force.

In the course of his campaign of January 1840, Grange burnt to ashes five Angami villages.

The fifth military campaign was started in November 1840 from Nowgong, under Lieutenant Wig, the chief assistant of the Governor General's Agent. Under his command, by January 22, 1841, the First Assam Light Infantry passed fifteen Angami villages without being attacked.

The sixth campaign was conducted by Lieutenant Wig in November 1841 to establish a boundary line between Manipur and the Naga area. The British political agent in Manipur, Captain Gordon, also took part in it.

In 1843 Angami Nagas raided Cachar in which four people were killed, besides much loss of property. The British then launched two military campaigns. Three of their men were killed in the first and six in second. Eighty nine Nagas had attacked the campaigns. No Naga was killed or captured. The British then stationed in village Lanka of Cachar, five men of the Shan police militia. On October 3 1844, Nagas attacked this station, killing three Shan soldiers, and injuring a fourth.

Then, on December 10, 1844, the chief assistant of the Assam Commissioner, Captain Ild, and the junior commissioner, Wood, along with the Second Assam Infantry

set out from Nowgong for Lanka Police Post to punish the Naga raiders. Before attacking the police post, the Nagas had spent a night at Asalu village. The British troops went there and burnt down the village. Then the troops went to Birema village, and coming to know that some people of the village had participated in the raid, burnt Birema as well.

Wood was then sent to Khonoma village. Getting there he straightaway demanded the handing over of those who had attacked Lanka and killed three Shan soldiers. The villagers returned the four rifles they had taken from the Shan soldiers but did not hand over the people who had carried out the attack. Wood's army then surrounded the village and burnt it down.

Prior to this, on November 30, 1844, Captain Butler took 55 soldiers from Nowgong and reached Dimapur on December 2. He set up a stockade there to station some soldiers. From there he went to the Samaguting valley and set up a stockade there too for a few soldiers of the Shan police militia. Going from there to Mejofema, Pherema, Pifema, Mejoma, Tokejanama, Loheynama and Rajufema villages he returned to Samaguting.

The Nagas of Khonoma, Kohima and Jakhama made repeated attempts to attack them, but the British force was vigilant and the attacks were not successful.

Then, under Lieutenant Campbell 100 soldiers of the Assam Light Infantry with Captain Butler, the chief assistant of the Assam Commissioner, set out from Nowgong on November 28, 1845. They were told to prepare a survey map of the Angami territory from where the attacks on Assam valley were being launched.

In February 1847, the British appointed an Indian (Assamese) Sejwal or junior police superintendent to keep an

eye on Angami Nagas. Along with a unit of the Shan police militia, Sejwal Bhogchand was put on duty in the stockade of Samaguting valley.

On March 13 news reached Bhogchand that villagers of Jakhama had carried out a raid and killed a few people. Along with seventeen soldiers and some porters Bhogchand set off for the village. On the way Nagas attacked them, captured one of the porters, tied him to a tree and shot arrows at him. They cut off pieces of his body, showed them to Bhogchand and told him that if he stayed on in their area, not only he but his soldiers too, would meet the same fate.

They found that around 1,600 Naga warriors armed with shields and spears were standing behind a stone wall ready to attack. Seven of the Shan soldiers got frightened and ran away. The rest were spurred on by a soldier named Ahina, and, firing at the Nagas they shot down many. When warriors in the front row fell, those behind rushed up with their spears. They too were shot down. After the death of several, the Nagas became aware that their shields of wood and bamboo were no protection against fire-spitting guns. They then picked up their dead and wounded and returned to their village, as Bhogchand and his soldiers went back to their stockade at Samaguting.

Pleased with the performance of Bhogchand, the British, in 1847, raised the status of the Samaguting stockade, promoted Bhogchand from Sejwal to Daroga and increased his salary to Rs 75 a month.

In July Bhogchand received a letter from Haridas Kachhari, a daroga in Manipur.

He asked Bhogchand to come over to Birema to investigate a murder committed by Nagas of Khonoma. He said he would wait for him at Birema.

Reaching Mezoma village in the neighbourhood of Khonoma, Bhogchand first took in custody seven armed Kachhari assistants of the village chief, Jubili.

Ever since 1832, when the military campaigns started from Imphal (Manipur), the Nagas had been the targets of fierce gun attacks by the British.

In the beginning the Nagas did not take much notice of the power of the guns. In a big battle of 1851 thousands of Nagas had gathered near Kigwema village with their spears, arrows and shields to fight the army of Captain Reid. Before attacking, the Nagas conveyed to Captain Reid through a messenger: "You are made of flesh and blood, and so are we. Come, hold your shields in your hands, as we do. Then let us engage in a fight to see who is stronger. We do not care for your barrelled weapons. We are sending you an example of our weapon, and a beautifully decorated spear was sent.

The messenger presented to Captain Reid a very beautiful shield and a spear, decorated with dyed goat hair.

There were 1,000 households in Kigwema. One of their warriors had killed seventy people in fights. From nearby Kekrima and four other villages too warriors had come to take part in the fight.

Captain Reid had 100 troops. With him was Lieutenant Vincent. They called over Lieutenant Campbell from Mezoma with fifty troops. The First and Second Light Infantry of Assam also reached the place with 150 guns.

The clash between the two sides took place at the foot of the Kekrima Hill. Opening fire, the British army killed more than 300 Naga warriors. At night the remaining Nagas attacked the British army and blocked its way to the water source. The earth

in Kekrima turned red with the blood of the slain. Ultimately spears and shields lost out to guns.

Angami Nagas, then went to Calcutta and Gwalpara in Assam to buy guns. Earlier they had carried this trade through middlemen from Cachar, for the Cacharis had old relations with the people of Bengal. In the beginning the Nagas did not know how to load guns and take aim. They employed Cacharis to teach them.

At Mezoma, Daroga Bhogchand, asked the second chief of the village, Nitholey, that he should forthwith hand over to him the people who had murdered the family members of another chief. To hand over their men to others for punishment was an insult to the pride and self-respect of Nitholey. He was ready to surrender himself and go under custody to the British station of Nowgong to explain the role of his companions in the murder. But he was not willing to turn over to Bhogchand those who had come to him for refuge. Bhogchand did not agree and arrested two companions of Nitholey and made arrangements to have them go with him to Samaguting and the district headquarters at Nowgong.

This behaviour of the Daroga enraged Nitholey so much that he left the village along with all his relatives.

In the meantime the British put up a wooden stockade at Mezoma, stationing in it three soldiers and a guard.

When Bhogchand, returning to Samaguting with the two people he had arrested, halted at Piphema for the night, one of the two escaped. Naga womenfolk and others cautioned Bhogchand that a fierce attack was going to be made on him and he'd better take precaution. But he paid no attention to the warning.

At night Bhogchand's men went to three different houses to sleep. Twenty soldiers and the remaining Naga prisoner in one, in the second Bhogchand himself, his attendants and ten soldiers, and in the third, seven arrested Cacharis who had been working as weapon bearers of a Naga chief.

At the crack of dawn Nitholey's men surrounded all the three houses and began showering spears at them. Bhogchand ordered his men to step out and open fire. But except for three Nepali and one Shan soldier no one dared come out to face the shower of spears from Naga warriors. The Nagas then set fire to all the three houses and the inmates were then forced to come out to save themselves.

Bhogchand, along with a Shan havildar and three soldiers had hardly come a few yards from the house when Nitholey hurled a spear at him which pierced his neck and ripped through his shoulders. He died on the spot. One Shan havildar, four soldiers and eight porters also died in the attack with arrows and spears. One Nayak, three soldiers and four coolies ran towards the military post of Samaguting, leaving behind guns, cartridges and fellow soldiers.

Nitholey knew that the British would come to take revenge for the death of their Daroga, havildar and soldiers. He went off to Khonoma village nearby and began constructing a strong fort there.

On November 29, 1849, the Junior Assistant Commissioner of Nowgong, Lieutenant Vincent, was sent to carry out a military campaign against Angami Nagas. With him went Lt Campbell, one subedar of the second Assam Light Infantry, seven havildars, seven nayaks, a bigular, and 130 soldiers. Lieutenant Campbell reached Mezoma village in January 1850

and began constructing a new wooden fortress in the centre of the village for his soldiers.

There Campbell came to know that in Khonoma village, facing them, a strong fort had been constructed. Two days later, along with a force of 62 soldiers, he set out to capture the fort. There his forces fired five hundred rounds at the fort in a day-long assault and then went to take control of it. But the attack proved futile and the fort could not be captured.

On January 26, when Campbell went to Jopshema village to look for rice for his soldiers, Naga warriors set fire to his just built stockade in Mezoma and reduced it to ashes. With it was burnt the grain stored for soldiers, other rations and army hardware.

Lieutenant Campbell thereupon told the government that for mounting an attack on the Fort at Khonoma at least 200 soldiers and a cannon were needed.

Since a cannon could not be arranged, the assault had to be postponed for next winter.

From December 1849 to mid-February next year, the Angamis attacked a number of British administered areas and killed 43 people.

Thereupon, along with 32 soldiers, Lieutenant Vincent reached Mezoma on March 6, 1850. From there he went to Khonoma, pursuing the fighters of Nitholey. There he set fire to the village where Nitholay's in-laws of the Pelhu family lived.

Pelhu was an ancestor of Zapuphizo, the rebel Naga leader.

This was the second time Khonoma was burnt by the British. On April 4, along with 100 soldiers, Lieutenant Vincent, after a night-long trek reached Jakhama early in the

morning and burnt down the village of 300 families as well as their grain stores.

Made of bamboo matting, like small dwellings, the grain stores were constructed at a distance from the village so that in case of a fire in the village the stores remained safe. In this attack by the British, six villagers, with two women, were killed. Jakhama village had provided food and shelter to the warriors of Khonoma, but had not resisted Lieutnant Vincent and his force.

The burning down of Jakhama angered the entire Angami region. The British then constructed a wooden fortress in Khonoma and posted in it 50 soldiers with an officer in charge. On May 8, when three soldiers with two guns stepped out of the fortress to fetch water, Nagas tried to capture them. As they ran back firing their guns, one fell down. The Nagas gored him to death with their spears and snatched away his gun.

Lieutenant Vincent then issued orders that when anyone stepped out for even urinating he should be protected by 20 loaded guns and soldiers.

On May 2 when Lieutenant Vincent set out to find the possibility of attacking Khonoma fort and take some villagers as captives, stones were hurled at his troops. To escape the barrage he had to rush back to his fortress. Three soldiers were injured by the stones.

On April 26, when Andaru, a soldier, went 40 feet from the fortress to relieve himself, he was pierced to death with spears. Lieutenant Vincent called all his troops and set fire to Khonoma village for the third time and reduced it to ashes again. Then he burnt down the neighbouring village of Tokoma too. Despite all this, the Nagas did not agree to live under the British rule.

After the burning down of entire villages during the ninth British military campaign, all Angami Nagas rose up in revolt. Earlier on, 160 fighters of Nitholey and 200 warriors of Khonoma had came out to fight the British. Now, according to Lieutenant Vincent, 5,360 Angami warriors stood in a battle array ready to fight.

An agreement reached between the Nagas and the British by the Principal Assistant of Nowgong district, Lieutnant Wig, in 1841, had fully lapsed now. Under its terms the Nagas who came to Nowgong for trading agreed not to carry out attacks, put an end to slave trading and raids on settlements in the plains. Powerful villages of Khonoma and Mezoma, accepted road construction to Samaguting and pay a tax to the British in return for trade facilities and buy salt from a depot set up in Dimapur.

But in April 1844 when a British official went to some villages to collect tax, the village chiefs refused to pay. Then attacks were made on British-ruled areas and policemen at a post were killed.

In 1845, the new Principal Assistant of Nowgong, Captain Butler, came to the conclusion that a strong permanent fortress should be set up in the hills, to keep the Nagas under surveillance. But the Governor General's agent favoured yearly military campaigns instead of setting up a fortress.

In 1846-47 Captain Butler went with troops to some Angami villages, carrying presents, and asked for an assurance that they would not attack the British-administered areas. By then the British had finished constructing the road from Mohangdejuwa to Samaguting, and also set up a godown in Dimapur for storing grain. These peace overtures of the British

had no effect because the British had by then come so close that the Nagas felt their safety lay in pushing them as far away as possible.

The British then decided to fight the Angami and defeat them militarily, so as to break their spirit and determination, once for all.

For this purpose they sent 500 troops of the second Assam Light Infantry for an attack on Khonoma village, under the command of Major Fucate. They took with them two cannons capable of firing three-pound shots, and two more cannons to fire mortars.

On December 10, 1850, this force came up and stood facing the Khonoma fort. At two p.m, from a distance of 600 yards, they began shelling the fort with mortars. The stone fortress was so strong that the mortars failed to make a dent in it. Then the two cannons of three-pound shots were taken up to within 150 yards of the fort, so that their shots could break its walls to enable British troops enter. The walls withstood the shots. The cannons were then brought to within 70 yards of the fort, but their shelling had no effect.

The day was waning, and it was decided that the troops should attack the fort together the next day. All around the fort ran a deep ditch, and below it was a ravine, deeper still. The barrage of spears from the fort prevented British troops from advancing. Then the troops, thirsty and exhausted since morning, went to the safety of a hill to spend the night.

The next morning they found that all the Naga warriors and villagers had left the fort and gone up to the snow-covered heights in the jungle. It was an empty fort into which the British gained entry.

In the ten hour fighting of the previous day, 34 men of the British army had been killed.

This campaign brought home to the British how expensive it was to fight in the Naga hills. Five hundred troops and six hundred porters had taken part in this campaign. Even this large a force could not take over the Khonoma fort.

After ten military campaigns the British regime came to the conclusion that entering the Naga region was a difficult and expensive proposition. To establish authority there they would have to post in the Angami area at least a battalion of 500, several British officers, and a superintendent with a salary of rupees one thousand a month, all of which together, would be too expensive. This was the conclusion of A.J. Kopher Mills in his report to the government of 1854.

Earlier too, the blockades and attacks of Angamis had deterred the East India Company from establishing control over their villages through army action. It had calculated a few years earlier that to maintain just one officer and one soldier in that area the company would have to incur an expense of 15,000 rupees a year. And if it levied a tax of two rupees per house, its income would be only three thousand rupees a year. It would be a losing proposition.

After these campaigns the British decided to concentrate on securing and safeguarding areas in the plains which they held in their control.

But the chief of Mejoma village, Ikkaari, made many attacks on Cachar. A British officer and historian, A. Mackenzie, had called Ikkaari a 'thorough barbarian'. In his report of 1884 he had written that Ikkaari wore the hair of enemies he had killed as garlands round his neck. Ikkaari was without fear. To know

what the British army camps were like he came over in person to the camp of Mr. Grange who had come from Nowgong to the Angami area. There he gave assurances that he would not attack the British-controlled areas. Mackenzie writes that Grange was not in a position to free the slaves taken and sold by Ikkaari to British-controlled villages, or punish him for the offence. Grange was forced by his helplessness to accept the assurances given by Ikkaari, without any guarantees.

(If one was a novelist one would write a novel about Ikkaarii!)

On January 11, Captain Reed, with 72 soldiers, went to Jopshema village to round up Nagas who had taken part in the battle of December 10, and to procure rice. While he was away, the warriors of Khonoma came along with the people of Kohima, armed with spears and shields. But on reaching the fort the people of Kohima said that their preparations for an attack were not complete, and so the attack was withheld.

Seeing himself being besieged, Captain Reed sent for a whole company of the Assam Second Light Infantry from Golaghat, Assam. And then coming to know that Naga fighters had gathered at Popolongmai, Reed went there with his troops and burnt down a section of the village. Going to Kigwema village after this he burnt that down too. Proceeding to Safama he was challenged by Nagas who asked him to come out and fight with a spear in hand, like them, to settle once and for all the question of who was a better warrior. Reed then opened fire and killed 300 spear-and-shield wielding Naga warriors.

After the destruction of Khonoma in 1850, the Nagas carried out 22 raids on British-administered areas in which they killed or wounded 55 people and took 113 as captives.

Between 1854 and 1856 they killed or took away as captives 232 people.

To save themselves from these attacks the British decided to set up an army camp at Samaguting pass, where Daroga Bhogchand had been stationed earlier. Lieutenant Gregory was told to reside there with 150 armed policemen. Lieutenant Gregory's task was to give passes to Angami Nagas going to markets, collect their shields and spears, and give them back when they returned.

This was the beginning of the 'Inner Line', which is now used for preventing entry into Naga territory.

In 1862 Sir Cecil Beedan had come as Lieutenant Governor of Bengal. Assam was under a Commissioner at that time. The problem facing Beedan was of keeping peace in the far flung and wild terrain of Naga Hills: a border area which had no roads, no shops, high mountains and forests, with marsh-filled valleys of small settlements of Mikir and Cachari people. How was this border to be kept free of Nagas' attacks?

For Nagas, mountains, forests and marshland were all part of their life.

From 1854 to 1865 Angami Nagas made several attacks on territories the British controlled, to stop the British from entering their mountains. Two hundred and thirty two people were killed, wounded or taken captive. Even in the region between Barapathaar and Asaaloo, where police posts had been opened, roads laid and patrolling started, Naga raids could not be stopped.

The Assam Commissioner, Colonel Hopkins, then decided to send Lieutenant Gregory to Samaguting to make renewed attempts to take over that country. The Nagas were told once

again to get permits to go to markets and leave their weapons at police posts.

In 1869 or thereabouts the people of Rajaphema village attacked a village of the Mikirs in northern Cachar, killing many and taking away some as captives. In 1867, one night, the Angamis attacked the British post at Gailati, and made away with heads of some policemen. They began intensifying their attacks on military and police posts and settlements. Neither the fort of the first British Deputy Commissioner of Samaguting, nor the large military and police force stationed in it could prevent these attacks.

The British then felt the need to go into the mountain region to control Angami Nagas. In 1878 they decided to set up a military camp under British officers within Naga territory. As stated earlier, a sub assistant, Mr. Grange, had conducted two military campaigns in the Naga Hills in 1839 and 1840. In both he had found the Nagas ready to fight. In the second campaign, from Popolongmai to Jakhama and Tokoma he had burnt down five Angami villages and taken away eleven Nagas as captive. After him Mr. Eld had carried out a campaign in 1844. After Bhogchand Daroga had been killed, Lieutenant Vincent had led two campaigns, in 1849 and 1850. In the second, Lieutenant Vincent was surrounded and another armed force had to be sent in December 1850 to rescue him. He returned to his base in March 1851 only after much loss of life.

As a result of these military campaigns the British had set up a 200 mile long contentious line of boundary. On one side of it was British-ruled Assam and beyond it were Naga villages ready to fight in self defence. The Nagas could fight anywhere in British-ruled Assam. Dense forests and fast rivers were no barriers for them.

Seeing all this, the Principal Assistant of Nowgong, Captain Butler, said to his government to get out of Naga country once and for all, for they were reaping nothing but failures from their wars in the region. In Mejoma village, to save a handful of Nagas who had sought asylum with them, the British had built a fortress of logs. To stay there for the sake of a handful of Nagas carried no meaning for Captain Butler. His reasoning was appreciated by the President-in-Council of the East India Company, and he passed orders for the British army to evacuate Samaguting and the fort at Mezoma, and return to Dimapur. The people who had sought asylum with the British in Mezoma were told to either stay in the village on their own, or, if that was not possible, leave the village and migrate to British-administered areas.

In February 1874, Captain Johnston who had replaced Captain Butler at Samaguting for some time, decided to take two Angami villages under British protection and in return levy on each household there a yearly tax in either rice or cash.

In March 1875 Colonel Keating, on becoming the Chief Commissioner of Assam, brought about changes in East India Company's policy. He began extending the Company's rule along with survey work in the hills. The same year the main office of the Naga area was taken from the plains of Samaguting to Okha, a village of Lotha Nagas in the hills.

In December 1872, Major Godwin Austen, the man who later accurately calculated the height of Mount Everest, was given the task of surveying the Naga region. Survey parties engaged in this work, along with security personnel, were seen all over the hills. The bustle of their activities increased the Nagas' suspicions that more preparations were being made to wrest their land from them.

In 1875, the deputy commissioner of Nowgong, Captain Butler, who had been to Naga areas several times and was on familiar terms with the people, went to a Lotha Naga village, Pangti, along with a survey party. The villagers, alert and on the look out for outsiders, killed him. The setting up of the main office along with a military camp at nearby Okha had made the Nagas suspect that preparations were afoot to take over their land.

Pangti village was then burnt down.

In December 1877, Carnegie, a Political Officer, went towards Mezoma village along with 186 troops of the Assam Light Infantry and fifty men of the armed police. By then the people of Mezoma had bought guns from various sources. They began firing at Carnegie's column advancing under Captain Briden. The Carnegie-Briden team had more guns and they took over the village and burnt it down. The people of Mezoma attacked this force at night and cut off their supplies of food and ammunition from Dimapur. Thereupon 100 soldiers of the 43rd Assam Infantry, the police inspector-general of Assam, Captain Williamson, and Lieutenant Macggregor were called and they set fire to all grain and food stocks of Mezoma. Carnegie, was killed, perhaps by mistake by a bullet of his own sentries.

On November 14, 1878, the Chief Commissioner of Assam sent troops further into the interior and took control of Kohima. There 450 armed police personnel were stationed and a wooden fortress erected for their security. A tax of two rupees per house was levied on Angami villages. A yearly income of Rs 33,000 was expected from this tax.

Then G.H. Damant was appointed the first British district administrator of Kohima. A wooden stockade was there. He

got news in May 1879, that twelve miles away in Khonoma village, people were buying guns and bullets. In Kohima Nagas were throwing stones at the British fort. In September the people of Pifema village staged a strong protest demonstration against the establishment of the British Stocade (fort). In October, Damant went personally to Samaguting, forty-three miles down, and brought over to Kohima some more troops of the 43rd Assam Infantry under Captain Reid.

Then, on October 3, with 21 troops, 65 armed police personnel and porters, Damant set out for Khonoma village to demonstrate the strength of British power. He stayed for the night at Jotsoma. When he set out in the morning his interpreter caught him by the arm and implored him not to go to Khonoma for the people there were waiting, ready to fight, equipped with guns.

Damant paid no heed to him.

On reaching the lower part of Khonoma, he left his equipment and half the troops there and began climbing up to the fort. The large, thick entrance door to the village was closed. As soon as he came up to the door a bullet rang out, went through his head and he collapsed in a heap.

Village warriors were hiding behind a row of big stone slabs erected in memory of some clan feast given long ago. They opened fire on troops accompanying Damant, which fled. The fleeing soldiers were stopped and attacked with spears and arrows by warriors of Jotsoma village and men of Chotanoma Khel of Kohima village. Eleven soldiers and twenty five police personnel were killed and twenty wounded. Among those killed were three members of Damant's bodyguard.

In the wooden fortress of Kohima, 100 armed police personnel and army men were stationed under the command

of Cowley, the police superintendent. Nagas surrounded the fortress and began their attacks on it. From the fort, the news of the death of Damant and his troops had already been sent through a messenger to the British post at Okha, 57 miles away. From there the Extra Assistant Commissioner, Hyde, came over to Kohima on October 19, alongwith 40 soldiers and 22 police personnel. The news of Naga attack was also sent to Imphal in Manipur.

In the Naga attack two officers were killed in Kohima fort and four wounded. Food was rationed and the British prayed to Nagas to allow them leave and give them safe passage to return to Samaguting.

At Imphal, Manipur, on getting the news of the deaths of Damant and his troops, the Political Agent there, Colonel Johnson, set out with 2,000 Manipuri troops and 30 bodyguards for Kohima and after five days of non-stop march reached there on October 27. His large force broke the Naga siege and saved the lives of the British inside the fort. On the day Colonel Johnson reached Kohima the British trapped in the fort were to return to Samaguting after assurances of safe passage from Naga villagers.

The news of the death of Damant reached the Assam capital, Shillong, on October 15. The 44 Sylhet Light Infantry was about to be sent to Kabul for fighting the Afghans. It was stopped and told to go to Kohima. The 43rd Light Infantry of Assam was also sent to Kohima on October 23, under Major Evans, along with the frontier police of Samaguting on the way, under the command of Lieutenant Maxwell. When this force reached Kohima it came to know that troops from Manipur had broken the siege.

After saving Kohima fortress, the British laid waste Kohima village and drew up a plan to keep the people under control, without the possibility of their rising in a rebellion. They had concluded that without ruthless steps their rule would never strike roots in the region.

To destroy Khonoma, a special force under General Nation was then set up. In it were included the 44 Sylhet Light Infantry under Colonel Nutall, 43 Assam Light Infantry under Major Evans and two cannons of the Royal Artillery under the command of Lieutenant Mancell. The Deputy Commissioner of Sibsagar district, Colonel Campbell, undertook to have the military equipment carried to its destination. Preparations for the campaign took up a whole year.

All these preparations were to attack one single village. In 1850, an army had been dispatched to wipe Khonoma out of existence.

In Khonoma the defences of the fort were strong. The British force mounted day-long attacks on the village. From cannons brought on elephants, they fired shots continuously, and by the evening had established control over a major area of the village. This was the toughest and longest battle fought by the British against the Nagas.

The Nagas had no means of protecting themselves from cannon fire. The fire came from the mountain opposite the village. Villagers had very few guns which ruled out their going to the mountain opposite at night and attacking the big British force there. Protected by their shields they could attack but there was no way of protecting themselves from cannons, machineguns, rifles and other quick-firing weapons. They had seen that in the battle near Kikrema village. British guns had

killed 300 of their warriors as they rushed at them with raised shields to attack. They did not want to commit that kind of suicide again.

After thinking it over, they decided that, as in 1850, the warriors and all the people of the village should leave the fort before dawn for the heights and launch attacks from there. They were certain that neither the British troops nor their cannon and bullets would come chasing them up the mountain. To fight on steep climbs and in jungles would be beyond the capacity of British troops.

The next morning, when a Nepali subedar (non-commissioned officer) was sent to Khonoma fort, he was most surprised. Let alone warriors, not even a single person was there or in the village. The whole lot, fighting until the night before, had vanished. In the fighting two British and one Indian officer, a subedar-major and some troops of the 44 Sylhet Light Infantry (SLI) were killed.

Once again, the whole village was burnt down. This time even fields were laid waste. Villagers were not allowed to return. Before their attack, British forces burnt down and reduced to ashes thirteen villages in the neighbourhood so that they may not be able to come in support of Khonoma. Among the villages burnt were Piphema, Merema, Sachema, Safema, Puchchama and Jotsoma. While burning villages two soldiers were killed and Lieutenant Campbell and two other soldiers were wounded.

On November 27 Jotsoma was attacked and taken over and a part of it burnt. Then an army unit was sent to villages in the east that had helped Khonoma.

The Angamis kept up their guerilla warfare. On nights of February-March 1880 they carried out many attacks, killing

50 troops. The British then took over Popolongmai village in the east.

A group of 55 warriors of Khonoma with seven guns walked eighty miles along the Barak river for four days, crossed thick forests of Manipur and entered British administered Cachar. On a January night, they attacked a tea plantation at Baladhan, beheaded its British manager, Blythe, along with 16 labourers and carried away their heads. They also burnt down the tea plantation, and passing by many police stations along the road they got back home safe.

For one whole year the people of Khonoma wandered in the forests, hungry and thirsty. Some died of disease, hunger and privation. At the end of the year, in February 1881, Sir Stuart Bailey, Chief Commissioner of Assam, allowed them to return. The conditions of their return were that they would not build on high ground on which their houses had stood, especially near their fort and would demolish the small fortresses built on peaks around. The returnees would pay fines to the British official in charge, in grain, provide free labour and cash. New houses would be built on low lying land, and they would not go to their fields except at sowing and harvesting time. Many families were not allowed to return and forced to live in other villages. Many well laid-out rice fields were confiscated. Each returning family was told that it would have to pay the British a tax of a maund (40 kilograms) of paddy, one silver rupee and some years of unpaid labour. The British appointed a chief for the area whose task was to ensure that the people obeyed orders of the new rulers.

Later, when the Nagas began attacking British-ruled territories, plans were drawn up to prevent them from feeling

secure. The first was to get them involved in trade and commerce, and if they still continued with their attacks, punish them economically, by banning them from trading in iron, salt and other essential goods in short supply.

The other was to bring Kuki families from Burma and settle them in Naga villages in British ruled areas. Many Kuki families were settled thus. But the Nagas' attacks did not stop. Another idea was to enlist Nagas in the British army. But no Naga stayed for more than eight months in the army.

Each military campaign of the British has its own story. Accounts of these campaigns written by those who led them are available. Foul words have been employed by the writers to describe the Nagas. They called them uncivilized, primitive, barbarous, cruel, untrustworthy and so on. But if one reads with care these accounts written by Abbot, Adams, Archer, Balfour, Wig, Waver, Butler (father and son) Carnegie, Clarke, Damant, Davis, Heimendorf, Gate, Goodwin-Austen, Hutton, Jenkins, Mackenzi, Mills, Augley, Pawsie, Pemberton, Shakespeare, Woodthorpe, Young, etc., one can sense the respect the authors had for the Nagas' spirit of dedication and cooperation, their fighting quality, their instinct for guerrilla warfare, military acumen, organizational capacity, alertness and refusal to accept defeat.

The general opinion of these writers was that a settlement with the Nagas was possible, but ruling after defeating them was difficult.

To this day the manner and spirit of their fighting has not changed. Now there is in this region the large army of India, fully equipped, fighting Naga guerrillas who carry their weapons on their back. In numbers Naga guerrillas are no match for the Indian army.

Military officials and some political scientists have said that the Indian soldier fights with his one arm tied. The facts and a full account how the fighting has been here is available. The Indian Air Force has used planes to search and kill Naga fighters. In 1960 the Nagas had shot down one plane with their rifle fire and held its crew captive.

It would be an empty boast to say that the Indian army could kill most Nagas. Today it is not possible anywhere in the world to wipe out an entire population. A large number of Nagas live in northern Burma. This will make it impossible to wipe out all Nagas. The Nagas of India can run away to Myanmar and continue their struggle from there.

The Indian government left no stone unturned to divide the Nagas and win sections of them over. With money, office and inducements it has won over a sizable number, against the separatists. But this has not solved the problem.

In March 1881 Eliot became the new Chief Commissioner of Assam in place of Stuart Bailey. When he went to see the destroyed village of Khonoma he was amazed. The returnees had already built new homes with bamboo and thatch in the lower area and were busy making preparations for sowing a new harvest. He had thought that after a whole year of wandering homeless in jungles, starving and returning half dead, they would be shedding tears of self pity. But no, they had immediately got down to tasks of rebuilding homes collectively and regained their strength as if they were born again. They were fully engaged in reestablishing their village and rebuilding their fields. A British administrator and historian, Mackenzi, wrote in 1884 that the administration could hardly have been as barbarous in any other place as in Khonoma. The population of

the village was changed by distributing its people among other villages. All houses, grain stores, agricultural implements and equipment were burnt. Fields were destroyed, their retaining walls and irrigation channels ruined. All means of livelihood had been destroyed. And yet these tyrannies had failed to break the spirit of Khonoma.

After coming back, the people set to rehabilitating themselves with a zeal that made it seem as if the war, death, famine, disease and one and a half year of living in jungle were mere dreams that had ended.

Men and women were singing while tilling fields.

The British told many stories of their war with Nagas.

It is necessary to read what British administrators have written about this unflagging, unbelievable war in self defence. J.P. Mills of the Indian Civil Service, administered the Naga Hills District for about 21 years, from 1916 to 1936. On the history of the Naga tribes and their social structure, he wrote some books, which today are essential reading for students of sociology in universities in the West.

Mills wrote: "To stop infiltration of the British empire, the Angami Nagas fought for forty years. From 1832 to 1850 the British carried out ten military campaigns and in 1879 one more, for gaining control of Naga country. In the last campaign Khonoma village was attacked with cannon fire.

"This campaign went on for five months, from October 13, 1879, to March 1880. For attacking one lone village a whole army under a General (Nation) was sent. In the war two English and one Indian officer and 44 troops were killed and about as many wounded.

"Before attacking Khonoma, thirteen of its neighbouring villages, Piphema, Merema, Sachima, Sefama, Puchchama,

Jotosma, etc., were attacked and burnt to ashes. Khonoma was wiped out of existence, and those of its population who survived, were driven away to forests to perish there.

"It was after almost two years of wandering in jungles, subsisting on either food smuggled over by relatives from other villages and forest produce and deaths, from cold and disease, that they were allowed to return."

Mills, who served as Sub-Divisional Officer of Mokokchung and Deputy Commissioner of Naga Hills, in Kohima, wrote: "Khonoma village is on its feet again. Even after years of wandering and living in forests, its unique, age-old tradition has not come to an end. Life there is going on again. Old songs are being sung. The inhumanity of war has left no scars on it. It is neither estranged from its ancient civilization nor worried over the future. It has not become a semi-civilised state."

Later, as soon as armed conflict started again in 1956, the Indian army burnt down the whole of Khonoma village. Walls of woven bamboo mats and roofs of straw were reduced to ashes. Once again its people were driven to forests.

Today, in Nagaland there is a ceasefire. The sight of Khonoma leaves one wonder-struck. Nagaland's most impressive church has been built here. In the art of stone dressing its people are unrivalled. Their beautiful workmanship on this religious structure, a hundred feet high and 300 feet in length, shows it.

At the foot of the densely forested Phegu hill above, the villagers have put up a 300 feet high memorial of the war they had fought against the British in 1879-80, which is visible from all around. It is a symbol of their spirit of independence. With cannons brought on elephants back, the British had fought here and then ruled for 60 years, before going away.

Khonoma still stands where it was. To ensure that the coming generations do not forget that their village had always fought wars to protect itself, the people of the village have put up a strong and enduring memorial of the war on the highest spot of their village.

Like other Naga villages, Khonoma stands on a hill, of the Hophera range. From it all movement around is visible. It used to be a well-knit, fortress village which has become somewhat scattered now after it was burnt down. On the straight sharp rise of 500 feet from the Khuid river, flowing below in a thin stream, and on the outer reaches of the Chhogu peak, stood the old fort of Khonoma. It was destroyed by the British in 1879 with canon fire. In 1993 it has been rebuilt. Its new walls are not as thick as those of old. The path winding up from the hill in front was so narrow that two people could not walk side by side. In 1992 residents of its Merema section (khel) have widened it with paved stones and have put up a wall along its sharp sloping edge. They have made it safe and one can now climb without the fear of falling. For this, the people of Merema divided themselves into groups, with each group carrying out 100 feet of work. Groups were composed of boys of the same age. Down below, where the climb begins, is a big gateway made of stone. Its door is made of a six inch thick plank seven feet high and six feet wide. It is a single plank without a joint, cut from a giant tree from the forest above. On its lower half is carved the face of a vigilant youth wearing a crown of the hornbill feathers. Over his head are two large eyes which scan all visitors. Above the eyes are carved two beautiful horns of a giant bull found in the area. This door was made in 1983. Its previous hundred year old door stands behind the new one.

On the road, a kilometer before the village, stones of light blue colour, eight to ten feet high and two to four feet wide stand like sentries. These are memorial stones of feasts given by villagers. Whenever a farmer had a bumper paddy harvest, he invited all his clansmen to a lavish feast. In memory of each feast the people raised these large stones brought from quarries. It was from behind these stones that warriors of Khonoma had shot and killed Damant and his soldiers.

Near the Khonoma fort entrance is a white pillar, on which the names of those killed there are written: G.H. Damant, M.A., C.S. (Civil Service), killed in Khonoma on October 4, 1879. Also killed and wounded are, Major C.R. Cauk, D.A.A.G., 22 November 1879, died in Khonoma, Lieutenant H.H. Para, 44, Gurkha Rifles, wounded and died in Khonoma, buried on 22 November, 1879, at Sachima, Lieutenant Ridgeway, 43 Bengal Infantry, killed (he was awarded the Victoria Cross), Subedar Nurwar Saheen, 44 Gurkha Rifles, killed in Khonoma on 22 Novemebr, 1879.

At the point where the road from Kohima enters Khonoma village people erected a broad, fifteen feet high pillar on March 1, 1995. Below a single star and a rainbow over it, are inscribed the names of 46 men and women of Khonoma who were killed by Indian troops between 1956 and 1992. Above the list of names is written in English, "The men and women of Khonoma who gave their lives for keeping alive the Naga nation. We will not allow their dreams to die."

Jadonang of the Naga area of Manipur was captured and hanged by the British because he fought for keeping alive his customs and traditions. His sister, Gaidilu, who escaped the gallows because she was a minor then, remained in jail from

1930 until the independence of India. Nehru released her, addressing her with the respectful title of 'Rani'.

For understanding the Naga problem it is necessary to take into account its early history.

Today many propagandists calling themselves experts say the Nagas raised the demand of independence on the prompting of the British.

But the truth is that no region fought British occupation like Nagaland or Nagalim did.

Chapter 12

Pangsha : Last British Military Campaign

Fifty six years after the British empire had made its inroads into Naga country, it launched its final campaign for extending its control in the Northeast, on November 13, 1936, from Mokokchung. In this campaign 150 Gurkha troops of the Assam Rifles participated, along with 360 porters carrying ammunition and food supplies, and Naga interpreters. This campaign was conducted by the Deputy Commissioner of the Naga Hills, James Phillips Mills. Gurkha troops were led by Major Williams. The overall assistant-in-command of the campaign was the Assam Police Officer, G.W.J. Smith, who was the sub-divisional officer of Mokokchung. With them was Christoph von Fuehrer Heimendorf, Professor of Human Sciences of London University. The reason for the campaign was a head-hunting raid by the far off village of Pangsha. For Nagas, head-hunting to obtain skulls for decorating paths, fields and community homes of youth, called Morang, holds great significance.

Nagas believe that within skulls lie psychic powers of women, men and children they belonged to. By cutting off heads these powers are preserved and can be utilized for the

good of homes and fields, to increase yield and make villages prosperous. Villages are built on heights from where they can see all around. These are protected by walls to prevent attacks. On narrow steep village paths thorny bushes are grown to make entry difficult. Lookout platforms are set up all around on high ground. Young men sit on these platforms as sentries. Attackers armed with shields and hatchets do however manage to sneak in, attack and take away heads. Sometimes the attackers lose heads to the defenders. That is considered a big disgrace to attackers.

Nagas of Burma did not stop taking heads, though in British areas the practice was stopped. People making new fields or houses offer them to their gods and spirits in sacrifices. Before being sacrificed, the victims caught in raids are made to drink a lot of rice or millet wine so that they would not know what was going to be done to them. Some were buried alive in the foundation of a new house so that their spirit would protect it.

In places under their rule, the British stopped the practice of head-hunting. But where their writ did not run, it continued. There was no limit to the number of heads taken or people captured as slaves. Many warriors had a tally of 30 to 40 heads.

Pangsha village was on Myanmar (Burma) border, just outside British-administered area and was not on the map.

Sometime in the middle of 1936, Pangsha villagers raided Saochu and Keyjok villages, beheaded some people and took away some as slaves.

It sometimes happened that when British troops or their porters were travelling through forests, Naga warriors attacked

them and took their heads. Nagas carried only shields, spears, bows and arrows and hatchets as weapons, while the British had guns. But in close, hand to hand fighting, guns were not as effective as Naga hatchts or daos. Spears could kill at twenty or thirty feet distance.

Nagas of Pangsha used other means as well. They placed poisoned arrows in trees which went off with the slightest touch of foot on triggers along path. Poisoned arrows were also used for killing wild animals. A mere scratch of an arrow could cripple a wild boar or even a tiger. Its poison choked the breathing passage.

Then they dug pits along haths into which they planted sharp bamboo splinters. Over the splinters they spread leaves to cover them. A fall or a stumble would wound one. Paths were also covered with short, sharp spikes that pierced soles or ankles.

After crossing the Deekhu, Chimeyi and other rivers, and trekking for nine days through an unadministered Naga area, the British force reached Chengmai village of Chang Nagas. It was an enemy village of Pangsha. Nagas living northeast of Pangsha were known as Kalyo Kengyu, but they themselves were unfamiliar with that name. The Helipong range of the Patkoi mountain divides India and Burma. The range comes into view much before a village can be seen. The highest peak of this range is Saramati, 12,622 feet high. It divides two major river valleys of the Chindwin and the Irrawady to the east, and the Brahmaputra to the west. From Helipong height one can see most Naga country. At the foot of the peak lies the region of Chang and Sangtam Nagas, to the west are Konyak, Ao and Lotha Nagas, and to the east the region of the Kalyo

Kengyu tribes, which had not been surveyed at that time and was unknown territory. In it lived the Chang, Imsungad and Kalyo-Kengyu Nagas.

Chengmai was a fortified village of Chang Nagas. Its chief, Chingmak had visited Mokokchung many years ago when Mills was the subdivisional officer there. He had met Mills at that time, who had welcomed him and his companions with warm hospitality. On hearing the news of Mills' arrival, he sent village warriors in full regalia and battle finery to welcome him. The warriors wore long strands of conch shells, cloth dyed blue, hats dyed red and decorated with black and white feathers of the hornbill. They carried hatchets in scabbards, anklets of bear-skin, red coloured wrist bands, and held in their hands heavy shields of buffalo skin.

Chengmai was an enemy village to Pangsha. For safety and security it was protected by two rows of stone walls. Between them lay a ditch, in which were planted sharp pointed bamboo spikes. Entry into the village was through doors so narrow that only one person could pass at a time. On tall trees platforms had been set up for warriors to keep a vigil. They raised alarm on sighting strangers to warn the village. Bridges connected the two stone walls protecting the village. Platforms were surrounded by deep, water filled ditches to prevent enemy entry. Lethal sharp bamboo spikes covered spots where there was not much vegetation.

Attacks upon each other by Changs of Chengmai and Kalyo Kengyus of Pangsha in quest of heads were common and continuous. In spite of this, marriages took place between them. The first wife of the chief of Chengmai was from Panso, a village of Kalyo Kengyus. To cut off the head of a father-in-

law or a brother-in-law was not considered taboo. Discord with in-laws is common the world over, but nowhere is it carried out to a point like in this area.

When the British forces were advancing from Chentang village to Chengmai, warriors of Pangsha village sent them a warnings that their village had no intention of returning those they had taken as slaves. They said they considered the British troops a bunch of women, to fight whom they would not insult their shields and spears. To send them running back, wooden pestles their wives used for threshing grain were enough! If the British force entered their territory, its every member would be killed, they warned. Villages that gave them help on the way would be wiped out.

The people of Pangsha were pastmasters in trickery. The next day, when the troops reached Chengmai, its chief, Chengmak said Pangsha had sent back to Chengmai without asking for money, three of the six slaves they had taken, and had sent a message that they would negotiate a settlement through their allied village, Impang, which was clearly visible from Chengmai. Impang, in partnership with Pangsha, had attacked the villages of Saochoo and Kayjok for heads and slaves.

Driven by fear of British military campaign, Pangsha returned two more slaves to Chengmai. Thus five of the captives had been returned. Of them, a young woman, a youth around 20 years of age, two boys and one girl, whose family members had all been beheaded, were in a traumatic state, for they knew that the people of Pangsha would sell them somewhere for sacrifice. In the range of Patkoi, around Pangsha, human sacrifice in house building and laying new fields was common. These slaves who had been returned did not know the language

of Chengmai and they did not believe that they had been freed. When Mills, Smith and Heimendorf were communicating with them through their interpreter, the five thought terms were being negotiated for selling them to white-skinned people.

With Mills was an interpreter of the Konyak tribe who knew a little of Pangsha language. The captives had it conveyed through him that the people of Pangsha had burnt down their village, but after taking them to Pangsha, had not ill treated them in any way. They had fed them well. They had no fear that the captive women and children would run away. But they had broken the knees of youngmen and crippled them so that they would not escape.

Of the captives they had taken, Pangsha had not returned a girl of Saochoo village.

Mills' troops camped in Chengmai for some days. But their fear of Pangsha people was so great that none of them dared venture out of the camp alone, and the people of the village began going to their fields in groups, carrying their weapons. Village warriors sat in readiness on lookout platforms, for defence. The fear of losing one's head in a lapse in security was ever present.

After a few days rest in Chengmai the troops advanced towards Pangsha, where they were to burn down the village in punishment. The village of Noklak was friendly to Pangsha, and enemy to Chengmai. Communication between the two had stopped because of this hostility and the path to Noklak was overgrown with trees and bushes. Seven men from Chengmai, led by the chief's 25 year old son, came over to the troops and set out with them to find the path and work as interpreters. They did not want wages or presents. Their attraction was the

possibility of taking a few heads from Pangsha. Chingmak's son had on earlier occasions brought back eight heads. Along with him were six warriors, the gashes on whose faces proclaimed their success as head hunters.

Thick bushes had to be cut at every step of the path. In the shade under the bushes blue flowers grew covering the slope down to the river below. These were the wild blue flowers the leaves of which the Nagas boiled to make a blue dye for their clothes.

Sharp splinters of bamboo planted on the path were hidden from view and wounded some soldiers. After a climb of some two kilometers, Noklak village, astride a hill came in view. Cutting away bushes, officers scanned the village through binoculars and saw some men advancing towards them hiding in the grass. They felt that more warriors might well be lying in ambush, hidden in the grass. They stood ready with their rifles to open fire, but the view was not clear through the bushes and tall grass. If warriors in ambush were hidden in the grass they could have speared the troops and cut off their heads. Something like this had happened in the Konyak village of Chinglaung. An advance columns of British troops going there was suddenly set upon by Konyak Nagas from the grass and bushes and by the time the troops could take aim with their guns, Naga warriors had slashed off their heads and disappeared in the jungle in another direction.

The way led up to an open slope, from where the troops saw at quite some distance Nagas twirling their spears. Sharp stakes covered the path and to fire from the open slope was not without danger. Many soldiers would be killed in close fighting that was bound to follow. Through the bushes the troops saw

that three members of the group above had moved away from the rest and were shouting something to the British. Chingmak knew their language. After listening to them, he said, "They are asking, do we want war or peace? See! They are waving tree branches and bushes above their heads, which means they want peace."

Chingmak's reply rang through the air: "Ho! Ho! Ho! We too want peace. Come over here."

With great caution the three came down, staring at the shiny barrels of guns in the hands of the troops. They looked different from Chang Nagas. Their heads were more rounded, and their faces too were round. Wrapped in blue cloth their chests were bare. Their bodies were tattooed, and round their necks were bronze garlands of human heads, proclaiming the number they had taken. Rows of cowrie shells were embroidered on their loincloths. The sea, from which the shells were brought must be very far away. Through how many hands would these cowrie shells must have passed to reach these mountains? The Nagas' love of cowries, without doubt, was very old.

The members of the enemy village who came down met Chingmak and his companions with great warmth and sat down on the ground to confer. There was no personal ill feeling or dislike between them. Attacking each other's village was old business. None was blamed for the number of heads taken.

Some years ago, the people of Noklak had come to Chengmai and lay in ambush to take heads. They lost the head of one of their own men in the raid, and instead of carrying back heads from the village, they had to carry the slain body of one of their own. The people of Chengmai had the time of their life, laughing and mocking Noklak.

The people of Noklak said to Mills that they had planted the path which his troops had to take with sharp stones and spikes of wood, only because of their fear of Pangsha. They prayed to him not to come to their village, for the Pangsha villagers might consider that as assistance given by Noklak and take revenge. Mills accepted their plea but for placing stones and spikes on the path, demanded some sheep and pigs in fine. Such fine was timely and useful for feeding the 400 strong force with him. For fear of attack troops set up camp for the night in a close formation.

Roofs of houses in Noklak were not made of straw or palm leaves like other villages. They were of stone slates. The houses were small and set close together. These were Kalyo Kengyu villages, built on the western slopes of the Patkoi range. There was no information about the language of these people or their customs. Their land had not been surveyed, nor was anything known about the extent of their area in Burma. On the map their villages were not shown.

Noklak and Pangsha were friendly with one another and on the preceding day the people of Pangsha had come to Noklak to know the possible intentions of the advancing troops.

The following day the path passed through an open slope for some distance and further on was covered with bushes, which had to be cut to advance. The troops heard voices from the hill above but could see nothing. The sentinels of Pangsha had spotted the troops coming up and were calling out alerts to villagers. But the troops below could not see the sentinels. To keep his forces gathered in one spot, Mills ordered the jungle behind to be set on fire. But the wind carried the flames towards the troops, who then had to fight the fire.

It was five hours after advancing from Noklak that an open slope came into view and the troops had their first look at the fearful terrain where they were to fight. Below them was the valley of the Langanyu river. Above rose a steep slope. Atop it was a dense layer of forest. Behind the top was a rocky range running south from northeast, which was the highest and longest section of the Patkoi range. The troops were at a height of 6,000 feet and the peak was more than 11,000 feet high.

Today this range marks the division between India and Myanmar.

On the higher reaches the slope were paddy fields of Pangsha, and above them lay the village. Its main section, at a lower level beyond the ridge was not visible but the first few houses of it were clearly seen on the near side of the hill.

Mills had heard from an interpreter, Maychay, that the people of Pangsha would come up carrying animals as presents, meet the troops and try to allay their fears of an attack. Later they would lie in ambush and mount a big attack. They would first encourage the troops to enter the village as friends, but then wipe them out while they returned, after bidding farewell. The plan of the people of the Pangsha was to convince the troops that they were coming to a friendly village and later when they relaxed and were off guard they would teach them a lesson for their presumptuous entry.

The troops saw that three villagers carrying a pure white sheep coming towards them from above. Through their binoculars they saw that near the river below hundreds of warriors armed with shields, spears and hatchets were lying hidden in wait. Suddenly a flash of light shot up. It was the reflection of sun's rays on their shields. They were trying to

hide in the jungle on the slope. Then there was no movement and all was quiet, except for the three emissaries coming down the slope for meeting the troops, leading a sheep.

The jungle that rose from the river bank below crossed the path to the village. The warriors perhaps intended to attack from the jungle as the troops passed the open slope. But time went by and not a leaf stirred in the jungle. Amidst all this the peace emissaries were calling out that they wanted to come down and talk. Mills said to them to come and meet him and his troops halfway. Of the three, two were middle-aged and one old. One dragged along a sheep by a length of rope, and a second carried a hen in a closed bamboo basket. Dressed in faded and ordinary loin cloths they were men of short stature. Compared with Chang warriors accompanying Mills they were nothing much to look at. But a close study of their faces gave a hint of the power and ruthlessness that kept the entire region in terror of them.

The interpreter, Maichai was called but he stayed hidden among the troops, scared of Pangsha people. Then, Chingmak, who knew a little of the Kalyo-Kengyu language, was called. He said the emissaries had brought an astonishing and attractive message of peace. They said that their village was overcome with joy at the arrival of the troops and had come with offerings of a sheep and a hen in welcome. "We consider you our elder brother, not only elder brother but our father. Even in our dreams we never thought of fighting with you. We pray to you for friendship."

Mills said he too wanted peace and friendship. But Pangsha would without question have to return the girl its people had taken from Soachoo. Hearing this, one of the emissaries said

with a grave face that returning the girl would not be possible as they had sold her long ago to a village to the east.

But just one day before that the people of Noklak had said that the girl was still in Pangsha.

The emissaries said it was true that they had raided Soachoo and Bojok, but taking a few heads was no big crime and no real reason for a stand-off. Mills then asked why Pangsha had sent him and his troops rude messages and warned other villages that if they allowed his troops passage they would be wiped out? There was no clear reply to this.

They were taken by surprise over Mill's action of returning the presents, rejecting their overtures of peace and knew that no agreement was possible without the return of the girl they held captive. The troops would burn down their village for their adamant attitude, Mills said.

This amounted to a call of war.

If the interpreter, Maichey, had not warned the troops of the plans of Pangsha, Mills would have been deceived by the message of the emissaries and killed by Pangsha warriors lying in wait.

The troops then marched down the steep slope through the jungle in which warriors lay hidden and reached the river below. They camped for the night on an island in the middle of the river. Here they felt they were safe from a sudden attack. To cut bamboo for building their camp some troops ventured forward. Right above stood the platforms erected by the people of Pangsha to keep an eye on the troop movement.

From platforms, Pangsha warriors could rush down and make off with the heads of troops gone to cut bamboo. Due to noise of the flowing river, calls to the troops to return could

not reach them. Major Williams told his men to stand ready with rifles aimed at the slope. And then they saw some people of Pangsha swinging their spears rushing towards those sent to cut bamboo. Troops standing below opened fire on the rushing Pangsha men. Two fell but soon got to their feet and vanished into the bush.

That night nobody stirred out of the camp. Generally the Nagas do not attack at night. The troops would have gained nothing by firing in the dark. At dawn Pangsha warriors could cause damage with their poisoned arrows which could pierce tents and wound soldiers inside. The troops decided that the officers should sleep under their camp cots. But no attack took place at night. Before sunrise, leaving behind some men to guard the camp and its equipment, the troops began climbing up towards the village. From above villagers kept hurling challenges to them, but stood beyond the range of rifles. Apart from the chance to attack at night, this was their second chance, which they did not put to use.

Pangsha was not fortified like other Naga villages. Who would dare attack this village of warriors? It was unconquerable.

The village was divided into three parts (khels).

Some 500 houses stood at a distance beyond a dry stream and jungle. In the centre of these was a cluster of banana trees and orchards. Sighting the troops advancing towards them, the village people took away things from their houses to hide them. A few cows, pigs and sheep were left behind. Until a day earlier they had full faith in their plan and believed that the troops would not climb up the hill to burn down their village, as threatened. Otherwise they would have taken their cattle too and hidden it in the jungle.

The village was practically empty. Before setting fire to it, Naga porters asked for permission to take away things from the houses. Then one of them speared a pig to death, another took aim and beheaded a cow. One man came away with chairs and beds, and into the hands of another fell beads and necklaces left behind by some householder. Never could the plunderers have imagined in their wildest dreams that one day they would be laying hands on the property of the all powerful village of Pangsha.

In the fire, houses of bamboo, the community home of the young, the attractive forms carved on wooden beams on ceilings, log drums of whole tree trunks for sending messages long distance, all were consumed. Another part of Pangsha lay some four kilometers away from this one. Mills thought it necessary to burn that down too.

After burning the main village and returning to the riverside camp to rest for the night, Mills sent back to Noklak porters along with some troops for their safety. At the crack of dawn, with a 140 Rifle Unit and interpreters, he and Williams began climbing the slope to burn down the branch settlement of Pangsha. He was to take some people as hostage from there to bargain with the people for the release of the girl from Soachoo they had taken away.

The houses of Pangsha were burnt down, but its teeth (the warriors) had suffered no damage, nor their spirit and strength to launch attacks on other villages was diminished in any way.

Fields of paddy lay along the path to the branch settlement. Paddy had been harvested but crimson red, ten feet high millet plants stood in the fields. Emerging from the fields, as the troops left the bush-covered path and came near the village on

the open slope, the sun came out and village guards spotted them. Loud cries of alarm and danger went up from them alerting everyone in the village. Pangsha guards were spread all over the hill, a man at every yard.

On the entrance to the branch settlement was a stone wall, but with neither a guard nor poisoned arrows. With some shoving and pushing large stones there were dislodged. Behind stood trunks of banana trees. Pangsha Nagas believed that the trunks could 'cool' bullets and empty them of their killing power. The settlement lay deserted. Ahead was a drum of a whole tree trunk and on a coral tree beside swung garlands of severed heads, many taken recently, with skin and hair still on them. Next was the severed foot of a child some three years old.

Cooking smoke was rising from many homes. The people must have left everything and run away for their life. Stepping into the houses it was surprising to see how few were the possessions of a people so fierce and dangerous as Pangsha. Smaller items of clothing were made of hemp fibre. To keep out cold, burning coal had been placed below bamboo beds. Ash was still warm under many beds.

Interpreters set to torching the houses and soon the air was filled with smoke. From the coral tree Heimendorf took down a few heads to take back with him as souvenirs and put them in a basket. But no soldier or porter was ready to carry the basket. Heimendorf then had to carry it himself on his back.

After burning down the village the task of punishing Pangsha was over and the troops began descending the slope towards the valley below. The path passed through the lower part of the village. And then flashed into view the shining

shields and spears held aloft in the hands of an unending line of warriors, rising from the village burnt down the day before and advancing fast towards the troops. The wave was still far but inspite of the weight of their shields and spears it was advancing at an astonishing speed. Its strength and determination spoke in its gait.

A frightful roar rose from the throats of the warriors. They had set out to cut off the path the troops were taking to the river and were on their way to attack them. There must have been more than 6,000 warriors in that horde. If the troops took the only path available to them they could not have escaped the attack. To steer clear of it they had only one option: get off the path and scamper down the steep slope, tumbling, falling, running, and reach the river. Tall, millet plants stood on the slope. If an encounter took place amidst those plants the British troops would not survive. Spears were effective weapons when the quarry was running. Running soldiers could not fire their guns, or take aim. A fight in the fields or hand to hand combat would have finished the troops.

They ran down the slope to save their lives. Each was on his own. One leapt down leaving behind a fellow soldier, another stumbled, and a third took a blind leap down. The troops were running for their life. Chasing them was the roar rising from thousands of throats. Soldiers running through the standing millet crop saw nothing. Their guns were of no use. Their faces were yellow with fear. Porters threw away the loot taken from the village. Two Chang interpreters rushed downward. Below, breaking the sharp slope was a small shelf. Standing on it the troops could fire on the attackers. Leading the troops were Smith and some Gurkha soldiers. After a few minutes the

sound of gunfire was heard. There was no time to see where it was coming from. At their back were Naga warriors who in minutes would be running their spears through them, and now there was this firing from the front! They prayed for bullets to fly over their heads as they rushed to reach the hill projection below.

Their barrage of bullets arrested the first wave of Nagas. The second took time to rise. In their front line Nagas keep their best, the most experienced and daring warriors. These had probably been killed by the bullets.

Major Williams decided that before a second wave rose his troops should make off the ledge for the safety below. Only then would they be secure. Who knew where the Nagas may be lying in wait!

Above them they saw the Nagas in formation already, raising their war cry. They were being held back by the continuous firing of the troops which prevented them from coming close enough to hurl their spears. But they were not stopped from chasing the running soldiers. The jungle on the river bank was small and sparse. Luckily the troops reached the thin connecting track to the bamboo bridge over the river. Across the bridge on the other side was neither tree nor jungle. There was no fear of an ambush from there.

Pangsha warriors chased them to the river, hurling insults and provocative challenges: "You come to fight us and then run away!"

The British consoled themselves, "Yesterday, the Pangsha too had run away when we reached their village!"

The danger passed for the time being.

The return trek to Noklak drained them out. Their packs

were heavy. Noklak village had seen the flames rising from burning Pangsha. They did not want to see their own village meet the same fate. A little satisfaction tinged them from the blows dealt to their enemy's ego. The people of Noklak stood at the main entry to the village, holding rice wine in bamboo hollows, as offering to the returning troops.

The wine raised the spirits of the forces. The village stayed alert nonetheless. No woman or child was visible. All had been sent to safe places in the forest.

With its stone roofs, Noklak was densely populated. Its small houses were built close together, with no space between them for even a small banana tree. The paths inside the village were heavily fortified. The biggest was the one coming from the village of Paso. There were a pair of protective walls four feet apart with thorny tree trunks in between. Thorn bushes grew on the ground, thick and impenetrable. Between the walls was an extremely narrow, covered path of wood on which only one person could walk at a time. This led to an extremely strong wooden gate, the entry to the village.

No sooner had the troops set up camp outside the village to rest and it was evening, news came that the people of Ponyo had come. Ponyo was in Burma, on the other side of the Patkoi range, and a friend and companion of Pangsha. Its people had been to Pangsha to express their sorrow and sympathy over its being burnt down. But why had they come to Noklak? Perhaps to go back and tell their people that they had met the white-skinned men who had burnt down Pangsha.

Mills called them over and with great caution they came, accompanied by the people of Noklak. After a few gulps of rum Mills offered them they lowered guard and said to him that in

the firing yesterday five warriors of Pangsha had been killed and many wounded. Mills asked them to convey a message from him to them that he wanted friendship with Pangsha, but he also wanted the release of the girl they had taken away. They would have to come to Chengmai village along with the girl within two days. There would be no ill treatment to whoever came from Pangsha escorting the girl, and would be allowed safe return to his village. He also said to them that if the Pangsha villagers persisted in their head-hunting forays to other villages and continued with their slave trade, they should not forget that the British administration had enough guns and more than enough bullets in stock to punish them.

On return to Chengmai from Noklak the troops set up an extra large, very comfortable camp. As fine for arresting the troops' advance to the east, the village presented a large mithan—a breed of big cow—to the troops. After killing and eating it, drinking barley and millet liquor, the troops and porters were content. A very tasty soup made from the soft, fat tail of the mithan cow was made for all the four Englishmen. Ox tail soup is considered the tastiest in the West. But ox tail soup is not a patch on mithan tail soup. Mills received the best experience and knowledge of Naga tradition. The meat round the small bones of the mithan tail is the softest and tastiest part of the animal.

The troops were resting after a heavy lunch when noise broke out and an interpreter came rushing in, out of breath, panting, and gasped: "The people of Pangsha are at the gate."

Everybody got up in a fluster. Had the Pangsha people come to fight? No, it turned out, they had come to talk about terms for a settlement, for which Mills had sent them a

message through the people of Ponyo, and had called them to Chengmai. The people of Ponyo too were with them. Despite his headlong rush from Pangsha, Mills knew that the people there would consider the deaths of five warriors of theirs and the burning down of their village a defeat, and would come to the British for a settlement.

From the gate they were allowed to come in singly, one at a time. For security their hatchets were taken away from them. Two days ago they had attacked these troops and driven them out of Pangsha. Blood rushed fast to the face of the British. But nothing ruffled the faces of visitors. Eight of them sat down in a semi-circle on the ground. Only three of them were from Pangsha, the rest were from Ponyo and Sauvlok, which lay in Burma on the other side of the Patkoi range. It was courageous of them to come over to Chengmai to the camp of those they had fought just the previous day, and put themselves into their hands. They need not have trusted the troops and come over.

Perhaps they felt that these troops were not as dangerous as they had thought. Among the people from Pangsha was a man named Maungsen, who was the greatest warrior of the village and the chief of a khel (part of the village). The people from Noklak said that he, with Sangtig, had led the attack on Soachoo, and both men had laid a wager on who would take most heads. Maungsen won with his tally of fourteen. Sangtig had died two days ago in the fight with British troops and now Maungsen was the leading warrior of the village.

He spoke in clear, collected and open tones, neither blame nor challenge ringing in his voice. His attitude was: "what happened has happened and is over and done with. It is best forgotten". The British troops had killed five outstanding

warriors of theirs and had burnt down their village. They too had tried to wipe out the troops. But now they wanted peace and so had come to Chengmai at Mill's invitation.

He too was in favor of peace, Mills said. He had no ill feeling towards Pangsha but wanted no revenge action from it against villages that had helped him and his troops. He wanted them to give up their custom of raiding other villages for heads. He wanted that the Pangsha villagers stop attacking 'this' (Indian) side. He said nothing about the 'other' (Burma) side. He wanted the return of the girl taken away by them as slave, for being sold. Agreeing to all the other conditions, the Pangsha group said the girl had been sold to the people of Saavlaav village, but no price had been taken. Maungsen said he would bring the girl back soon.

All terms for maintaining peace were agreed upon. Mills then said to Maungsen that now that there was no charge of murder by anyone against anyone, the air was clear. He then, as custom demanded, poured some rum into a mug, held Maungsen by the hand, drank some of the rum and gave the mug to Maungsen. Maungsen dipped a piece of ginger into it, threw it away and then drank down the rum in one gulp. The ritual was repeated with the other two men from Pangsha.

Pangsha people spoke more openly now. Maungsen said that in their attack on the British troops a day before, he was in the front line. Bullets flew all around, but did not hit him. He did not die, he said, because a few days ago when he had come to Mills with the peace proposals of his village carrying a sheep and a chicken as offering, Mills had addressed him as 'Lamboo', which meant 'messenger of god', one who does not get killed. God had probably heard this word uttered by Mills

and was therefore protecting him. His companions agreed with him. The people of Pangsha were talking as freely and easily as with old friends, not with men who had been their enemies two days ago!

The British had never seen men of such candor. This was certainly a most endearing aspect of Naga character!

One of Maungsen's feet was badly burnt. When the troops had left after setting fire to his village, he had run to rescue a pig of his he had kept tied in a house. His leg got burnt in the fire, became swollen, making him hobble. In spite of the hobble he was at the head of the fighting men the next day and had also marched to Chengmai from Pangsha. A foot as burnt as his would have made even the best of warriors take to bed.

Mills had his foot medicated and bandaged.

During the talks it came to light that the people of Pangsha called their village Vailaam. They had never heard the Kalyo-Kengyu word, by which outsiders knew them. They had no name for their tribe. Their language resembled that of Noklak village, but was different from that of Ponyu.

In the beginning Chingmak had asked Pangsha village for the return of a man caught and sold to Ponyu. He was brought back. In Ponyu a kindly husband and wife couple had adopted him as their son. His body was tattooed like that of the people of Ponyu and he spoke their language. On coming back he said he did not want to return to Chengmai. He had got married in Ponyu and had become its citizen.

Mills gave large quantities of salt as gift to his guests from Pangsha, Ponyu, Sauvlov and others. Salt is in very short supply in this region. Mills also gave red blankets to the people of Pangsha. Those draped in red blankets were considered friends of the government.

After coming so far from Kohima, Mills couldn't resist the temptation of going to Panso. By air the distance from Chengmai to Panso is barely ten kilometers. But since he and his troops had to go round the Yakko mountain base, to get there the journey took three full days. Holding thick, long and hallow bamboos filled with rice wine, the people of Panso stood at the main gate of the village to welcome the troops. This welcome was not just an ordinary welcome. A few months before, some people from Pangsha had come to this very gate and challenged them with cries of "come, fight us". Then they had beheaded twelve people of Panso and made off with them without losing a single head themselves. The men of Mill's troops asked the Panso people why they had come to the gate to fight when their village was so heavily fortified with walls, bushes and other deterrents? But Panso also considered itself a village of warriors and of warrior tradition. How could they stay quiet, ignoring the challenge hurled at them? And then, carrying away their booty of twelve heads Pangsha men had thrown at them the insulting remark: "We wanted to show you what kind of people we are! We have accomplished that! You need not fear any more. But don't you dare follow us!" After losing twelve heads Panso was drained of all fight and had no nerve to follow them and wreck revenge.

But now they had their revenge on Pangsha, through the white men who had burnt it down.

They put up a beautiful and comfortable camp for the troops. They sang songs of welcome of them. Heimendorf began taking photographs. They had never seen a camera before. Heimendorf showed them the green filter of the camera through which everything looked green. One of them held

Heimendorf's hand and peered into the lens. But it was not the green colour that captivated him and held him in wonder. It was Heimendorf's thin wrist that seemed strange and wonderful, and he expressed his wonder to others. Everybody then wanted to touch and feel his body, his bones, all parts of him. Heimendorf feared that these hands used to holding heavy hatchets and shields, might be wanting to see how much softer his bones were, how very breakable, how his neck compared with theirs. He rushed back to the camp in fear. Listening to his story everybody there was swept by fear. Some had lost their lives through precisely such close physical examination. He was cautioned to refrain from providing such bait to Nagas!

Panso village was divided into two parts. The two fought sometimes. For their skirmishes they had different weapons, made of wood, not of iron which killed.

The troops were invited to the home of a village chief. On the outer wall of his house were fixed sixty severed heads. When he would die the heads would be hung on bamboo poles near his grave. His son or another warrior would give a new décor to the house with heads he would acquire on his own. Outside the chief's house a large tree had been hollowed out to make a drum. The width of the hollowed part was four feet. Men could easily sit within it.

The whole village danced in welcome to the troops. All were dressed in traditional finery. On their heads were exotic looking hats decorated with hornbill feathers. On some hats were huge horns of mithan cows. Chunky Ivory bracelets circled their arms. To keep the heavy hats from slipping, they were tied under the chin with tiger claws. Cowrie shell chains dangled over their loin cloths. Between their knees and feet

were stockings made of bear skin, which protected them from slivers of bamboo their enemies placed along their path. The youth dancing in circles took spectacular leaps into the air and then with knees bent took slanting steps.

The people of Pangsha kept their promise to the troops. They brought back the girl they had taken from Panso for selling as slave and restored her to her overjoyed mother. The people of Chengmai brought the troops four mithan cows and some eggs given by Pangsha in fine. They delivered a message along with the presents. "We are very proud over becoming sons of the government, but do not come back to our village. We are facing great harassment from our wives. They will not allow us rebuild our houses as long as you stay in the vicinity." (Mills' troops had burnt down their houses.)

Chapter 13

Kohima in the Second World War

The Second World War brought about a strong upsurge of political consciousness in South East Asia. It triggered active struggles for freedom in colonies ruled by imperialists: in Indo-China against French, Indonesia against Dutch, Malaya, Burma and India against British. In some, people began struggles for independence during the war. Some fought the new Japanese imperialism.

As part of the process of bringing these nations under its control, the Japanese tried to incite nationalist forces to drive out the old imperialists. Japanese aim was to enlist nationalist forces to help Tokyo establish itself in them. They talked of the establishment of "an Asian Co-prosperity sphere." It was in pursuit of this policy that the help of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose of India was sought. In India an independence struggle was going on and Gandhiji had launched the "Quit India" movement, asking the British to go. The Japanese were aware of that and also of the wish of the Indian people to be free. They thought it was good time to oust the British and obtain control of India.

The Japanese army had pushed the British out of Burma and entered Naga Hills in 1944. It was here that some of the fiercest battles of the Second World War were fought.

This war was not connected with the Nagas. The Nagas were happy with their simple life of farming when they suddenly saw two big armies of the world come to their land to fight: the Japanese army to conquer India, and the British army to save their control of India. Naga country was the meeting ground of these armies.

Setting out from faraway Japan, crushing China and the nations of South East Asia, ousting colonialists of France, Holland and Britain, establishing control over a vast area, the army of the country of the rising sun reached Imphal, the capital of Manipur, and Kohima, the Naga centre, in March 1944, on its way to the Brahmaputra valley, the northeastern gateway to India.

Seventy five kilometers below Kohima, in the valley of the Dhansiri river, was a small town, Dimapur. The Brahmaputra valley lay next to it. In Dimapur were vast depots of food and weapons of British and Americans fighting in South Eastern China and Northern Burma. Trains from Indian cities and ports brought stocks of 4,400 tons of food to these depots daily.

The Japanese army was exhausted when it reached Imphal-Kohima, after five years of fighting over 7,000 kilometers of territory and establishing control over it. Its food stocks were finished. Its air force had lost its ability to provide cover to its troops on the ground.

Entry into India from Burma was blocked by hills on three sides and by sea on the fourth. It was through the sea that the British had entered Burma and captured its capital Rangoon

(Yangoon) in the last century. This was an easy route and the British thought that the advancing Japanese forces would also use the sea to enter India. This did not happen. The Japanese entered Burma and the Naga Hills through the land route from Thailand (Siam).

The Japanese had one hope; somehow advance 75 kilometers from Kohima and establish control over Dimapur. Dimapur was the point of entry to the Brahmaputra valley. It housed depots of food and weapons. The Azad Hind Fauj of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, composed of surrendered Indian soldiers, was with the Japanese Army. In India the Congress had begun its 'Quit India!' movement and was trying to get rid of the British rule. In such circumstances, the Japanese thought if they reached Dimapur, the Indians may welcome them.

The Japanese goal was India, and their campaign cry was "Dilli Chalo!" (go to Delhi). The British army had retreated from Akyab in Burma and taken up position in the Chittagong-Comilla area to prevent Japanese entry into India from the sea. The British thought that after taking over Singapore, the Japanese would take the quicker sea route to India. They did not imagine that the Japanese would try to enter India from the dangerous, disaster-ridden route that ran through pathless forests of Burma, passing through Peguyoma, Arakan and Mayu mountains in the east, and crossing wide, swift Mekong, Salween, and Irawaddy rivers. These mountains, forests and rivers were formidable barriers.

But the Japanese army performed this unparalleled, difficult task and reached Manipur and the Naga area.

In March 1944 the British found the Japanese laying siege round Imphal and Kohima. Concerned, they began bringing their troops by air to Dimapur from various stations in India.

Had the Japanese taken over Dimapur, entering the plains of India from the Brahmaputra valley would have been easier for them to complete the first stage of their "Dilli Chalo" campaign.

This possibility was however denied to them. Two senior Japanese generals, the commander in Burma, General Kawabe, and the Singapore-based highest ranking Army commander in South Asia, Count Tirouchi, stopped the Japanese army from advancing to Dimapur.

Two lieutenant generals of the Japanese army, Renya Mutaguchi, commander of the 15th army, and Kotuko Sato of its 31st division, were not in favour of obtaining total control over Imphal and Kohima towns. Both thought that nothing much was to be gained by controlling the two minor settlements of some ten to twenty thousand people. For them the control of the doorway to the Brahmaputra valley, Dimapur, was more important. Not just food supplies and weapons were there plentifully, it had the only rail connection to the rest of India. This railway line went up to the last northeastern town of India, Ledo, from where food and weapons were sent by air to American forces fighting in Yunnan province of China and northern Burma. The Japanese army, after crossing southern China and Burma had reached India.

The British army was not in a position to defend Dimapur at that time.

Generals Mutaguchi and Sato knew that if the railway line at Dimapur was cut, British and American forces stationed in northeast India and northern Burma would be stranded and would not be able to fight. To do so would be a good start to their campaign of "Dilli Chalo".

If this railway line was cut at Dimapur, the British would not be able to send troops, food and war material to Kohima and Imphal and the British forces there would have no option but to surrender to the Japanese.

In Kohima there was no more than a British garrison of the wounded and those recovering from malaria and other diseases. In Imphal there was, under Lieutenant General Jeffrey Scoon, the Fourth Corps of 30,000 Indian troops of the British army. On March, 3, 1944, it had been surrounded on all sides by the Japanese and was cut off. Food had to be air dropped to it. It had no escape route from the Manipur valley, for the hills around were in the hands of the Japanese. Cutting the railway line at Dimapur would have changed the fate of the war in northeast for the British. And the fate of American forces fighting on the border between northern Burma and China would have been no different.

The 31st Japanese division of General Sato captured nine-tenth of Kohima, and kept up its attack on the remaining area where the bungalow of the British Deputy Commissioner was located. He sent a unit towards Dimapur.

A descending motor road ran from Kohima, 5,000 feet high, to Dimapur, 75 kilometers below, situated in the valley of river Dhansiri. Sato troops did not take the road to go down. From Merema village, north of Kohima, they descended through a valley to the village of Khabhooma, where they met the motor road to Dimapur, which was only 56 kilometers away. There they cut off the Dimapur-Kohima road. The Second division of the British army was being sent to Kohima at that time. Its front units were held up where the road was cut.

Armies follow discipline, and the Japanese army perhaps all the more so. Before the Japanese could reach Dimapur,

General Mutaguchi from Burma sent two messages. The first to General Sato, telling him to advance towards Dimapur and cut the railway line and take control of food depots there so that the Japanese army may have the supplies.

The second message was to General Kawabe, the commander of the southern army who was his senior and whose office was in the Burmese town of Memyo. He said the Supreme Commander in the south, Count Tirouchi, be asked to get the air force ready in aid of the Dimapur campaign.

Once this was accepted, Mutaguchi calculated, they would reach Dimapur in three to four days and surround and occupy it.

This was quite possible. The commander of the 14th Army of the British, Field Marshal Slim, who later drove the Japanese back, said the same thing. He wrote that if the Japanese general had retained one battalion in Kohima to keep up the action there and sent the rest of his force to Dimapur, he would have taken control of the place. There were no defences in Dimapur.

But General Kawabe, the Japanese commander-in-chief in Burma, turned out to be a stickler for rules. His reply said that Dimapur was not the main target of the 15th division (Mutaguchi's army). Mutaguchi urged him to think about it again. But Kawabe was adamant. And so was Count Tirouchi, the Supreme Commander of the Japanese forces in Singapore, in General Kawabe's support.

For the campaign in Burma a conference had taken place in Tokyo in 1943 between commanders-in-chief, and an agreement was reached. According to its decisions, on January 7, 1944, orders from military headquarters in Tokyo came to General Kawabe that his division should first take over the enemy

entrenchments in Imphal, establish control over it and to its northeast, so that the Japanese army was safe in Burma.

The order did not make clear the area and extent of fronts in Northeast India. Mutaguchi took it that Dimapur was included in it, but to Kawabe control over Imphal-Kohima was the main aim.

Mutaguchi could not go against Kawabe's orders, although he was fully confident that if General Sato was able to keep control over Dimapur for just a month, British forces in the area would have no alternative but to surrender.

In accordance with Kawabe's orders Sato's troops were called back from their position on the Dimapur road and asked to take full control of Kohima.

And what was the condition of the Japanese forces that had reached Kohima, hacking their way through a daunting and difficult forest terrain? Sato's 31st division had come after crossing the world's most difficult geographical area, where there were no paths, let alone roads. War material, including anti-tank guns, had to be carried on the back of mules and bullocks. Seventeen mountain guns were brought on elephant back. Bridges had to be constructed over rivers. For bridge-building work alone, 3,000 horses and mules, and 5,000 bullocks had been used. Soldiers had been instructed by Sato to carry only minimum items of personal use and a maximum number of cartridges, and only three weeks' food supplies.

His army was stricken with hunger and disease when it reached Kohima, passing through Somra, Kharasom and Jessami. Hundreds of its mules and bullocks had died on the way. Some were killed for food on reaching Kohima. Troops went to Naga villages in search of rice. Nagas saw soldiers using

their helmets to boil rice they procured. Japanese were that short of supplies.

On March 15, 1944, the newly-formed 33rd Indian corps of three divisions under Lieutenant General Montague Stopford was camped at Aundh, 12 kilometers from Pune, in western India. Of it one infantry division of 16,000 consisted only of English soldiers. This Second Division was the only of its kind in the whole of India. It had been sent in 1942 to stop sabotage by the Congress Party and its supporters during the Quit India movement. The British government did not trust Indian soldiers to do that task.

This British division considered Indian troops ill disciplined and wayward. The pay scales of its officers and soldiers were extremely high and special rations were provided for them. Even the Indian administration of the British government considered this as undue extravagance. In 1944 when under Major General John Grover this division was training in jungle warfare in the Pune-Belgaum-Bangalore region, it was ordered to proceed at once by air and train to Kohima.

In May 1942, the Japanese had completely driven out the British from Burma, but they did not straightaway cross the Burmese frontier and enter Manipur in India. The capital of Manipur, Imphal, surrounded by mountains was in a valley 2,600 feet above the sea level. Like the nearby Logtak lake filled with ducks, this valley might also have been a lake. To its northeast was the Patkoi range, and to northwest, the Brahmaputra valley.

In 1942 when the Japanese invaded Burma, vast numbers of Indian and other communities in that country fled to save their lives. Nobody believed that the British forces would be able to stop the Japanese advance. Masses of Indians whose

numbers ran into millions, who had heard and read about Japanese cruelties fled towards their country. The whole labour force in Burma–those doing coolie work, cleaners, dock workers in Rangoon and household servants—were all Indian and they fled. The ships plying on the seas were not enough even for carrying the feeling British.

The Indian population fled by rail, road or simply on foot. Fleeing with them were Englishmen who were traders in timber and mineral oil in far off northern Burma, Anglo-Indians, Anglo-Burmese, Nepali and other foreigners. Most of them had to cross hills and jungles, holding their children by the hand and carrying their belongings on their head. To reduce weight they kept leaving behind pieces of luggage on the way. Trudging along unending, wild and difficult tracks, many of them died of hunger, disease and exhaustion. The strength to stand up after sitting down for a little rest had deserted them. The old got left behind.

Forests of Burma are home to malaria-carrying mosquitoes, snails, snakes and scorpions. Water in its streams is not fit for drinking. Drinking it because of thirst, many fell prey to dysentery and died.

Running ahead of them were men of the first Corps of the British Army, their uniforms in tatters. Only a fourth of their 30,000 men made it to Manipur. Nobody had even a blanket for cover. With them were 3,000 wounded. Dumping baggage along the way, some managed to reach Imphal.

In the middle of April came fierce, immobilizing rains of the region.

Beaten, defeated, tired, wrapped in rags, the 38th division of the Chinese army too, routed by the Japanese, tottered up to Imphal.

Reaching Imphal, on foot, running for his life from Burma and the advancing Japanese army was the American General, Joe Stillwell, the Supreme Commander of the combined Chinese and American forces in the area.

A half-dead civilian horde of 50,000 refugees also reached Imphal at the same time.

Imphal town with its population of five thousand was overrun by almost 250,000 civilian and military refugees.

Imphal was a part of the British empire. When its army, retreating from Burma, soaked to the skin in rain, half dead with exhaustion, reached Imphal, there were no arrangements for its men. Troops were sent to the hills to the north for spending nights under trees. They had no medicine, waterproof cover, blankets, or tents. According to the British Army Commander, Field Marshal William Slim, eighty-nine percent of them were ill.

After their conquest of Burma the Japanese took about two years to attack Imphal.

Why did it take so long? The answer lies buried in the debris of Japanese collapse after two nuclear bomb attacks. On being asked later, the arrested, exiled (to Siberia) Japanese commanders said: "For vanquished generals to speak in defence of themselves is not seemly!"

To get an answer it will be necessary to search through Japanese archives.

How was the Japanese army defeated?

The Second World War Troop Formations in Naga Area

British Forces:

In the beginning there was a small garrison of sick British-Indian troops in Kohima. Later a large number of troops were brought in. With them the British army's Order of Battle was as follows:

Kohima Garrison (On 3 April, 1944):

Royal Indian Army Supply Corps:
46th G.P.T (General Purposes Transport) Company (minus two sections)
36th Horse and Mule Section;
623rd Indian Supply Section;
Labour (Coolies): 1432 Company; Bharatiya Pioneer Company;
Others: About 200 British troops from the Reinforcement Camp, Administrative Commandant and Unit Staff (Total around 2000);
33 Corps: Armour (Tanks etc.)
149 regiment of the Royal Armed Corps;
150 regiment (detachment only) of the Royal Armed Corps;
11th Cavalry (Armed Corps);
45 Cavalry (Light Tanks);
Cannon: One medium regiment of the Royal Artillery;
50 Indian Light Anti-Aircraft/Anti-Tank Regiment;
24 Indian Mountain Regiment (from 5 Indian Division)
Engineers: 429 Field Company, Indian Engineers;
44 Field Park Company, Indian Engineers

Infantry: 1st Burma Regiment, Burmese Army;
1st Chaman Regiment;
1st Assam Regiment; Sherey Regiment (Nepal);
2. Infantry Division: with artillery.
Royal Artillery: 10 Assault field Regiment; 16 Assault Field Regiment; 99 Assault Field Regiment; 100 Light Anti-Aircraft/Anti-Tank Regiment
Engineers: 5 Field Company; 208 Field Company; 21 Field Park Company
Signal: 2 Division Signals:
Infantry: 2 Reconnaissance Regiment; 2 Manchester Regiment (machine gun battalion):
143 Special Service Company.
4 Infantry Brigade: Brigadier W.H. Gaushain, till May 7, 1944,
Brigadier J.A.Theowalders, till June 4, 1944,
Brigadier A.S. McNaught:
1 Royal Scots; 2 Royal Norfolk Regiment; 1/8 Lancashire Fusilliers;
5 Infantry Brigade: Brigadier V.F.S. Hawkins, till May 16, 1944;
Brigadier M.M. Ellston-Roberts—West;
7 Worcestershire Regiment; 2 Dorsetshire Regiment;
1 Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders;
6 Infantry Brigade: Brigadier J.D. Shapland, till 30 May 1944; Brigadier W.G. Smith;
1 Royal Wales Fusilliers, 1 Royal Warwickshire Regiment, 2 Durham Light Infantry;
Medical: 4 Field Ambulance; 5 Field Ambulance; 6 Field Ambulance;

161 Indian Infantry Brigade; 4 Queen's Own Royal West Kent Regiment; 1/1 Punjab Regiment; 4/7 Rajputana Rifles;
33rd Indian Infantry Brigade; 1 Queen's Royal Regiment (West Surrey); 4/15 Punjab Regiment; 4/1 Gurkha Rifles

23 Long Range Penetration Indian Infantry Brigade has not been included in this list because it did not participate in the war here much, nor has 268 Indian Brigade been included, for the same reason.

The Japanese Army:

31 division.

Right (Northern column): One battalion of the 138th Infantry Regiment, along with a battery of the 31st Mountain Artillery Regiment, Engineers, Signals and Medical detachments.

Central (Middle Column):

Advance guard; 138th Infantry Regiment, minus one battalion; 31st Mountain Artillery Regiment, minus one battery which had been sent with the Right column.

Main Body (Main Army): Headquarter 31st division; 124th infantry regiment and one battalion of the 31st Mountain Artillery Regiment, along with engineers, signals, one field hospital and one headquarter transport unit.

Left (Southern Column): headquarters of the 31st Infantry Group, along with the 585 Infantry Regiment; one battalion of the 31 Mountain Artillery Regiment, Engineers, Signals and medical detachments

In sheer numbers, just one division of Japanese forces that was sent to fight the British army in Kohima was small, less than one third of the British strength.

The British Air Force was present in full strength. The Japanese had no planes left. Because of the bombardment by British planes the Japanese could not mount attacks in daytime. They could attack only at night and were successful in that.

How did the course of the war change in Kohima?

Some reasons have been given earlier. The Japanese army was exhausted after its advance over 7,000 kilometers. Stopped from advancing further towards Dimapur, it was caught in Kohima-Imphal battle.

On January 22, 1944, the Commander of the Japanese army in Burma, Lieutenant General Renya Mutaguchi, was given orders to attack India and start its "Dilli Chalo" campaign.

On that very day the British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, wrote a note to his Defence Minister, Lord Ismay: "The report of the Combined Intelligence Staff (American and British) strengthens my feeling that the danger of a Japanese attack on India is over."

In his speech in the Indian Legislative Assembly on March 30, the British Commander-in-chief in India, Field Marshal Sir Claude Auchinlek, said: "We cannot straightaway put down every threat of the Japanese, but I am confident that the security of Assam has never been in danger."

The Kohima-Imphal campaign of the Japanese began on March 6, 1944. The 214th regiment of its 33rd division attacked the Tojang bridge on the Manipur river on that date. In Tidim, south of the bridge, the 17 Indian division of the British army was fighting. Seeing it surrounded, the commander of the 4 corps in Imphal, Lieutenant General Jeffrey Scoons, ordered it to retreat to the Imphal valley. In defence of the besieged

17 division, Scoons sent the 23 Indian division. It was torn to shreds on the way. Towards Ukhrul, in the north, an Indian parachute brigade was lying entrenched. It was destroyed in a Japanese attack and Ukhrul fell to the Japanese. The brigade had to retreat and get back to Imphal.

The British brought in their Fifth Division from Arakan by air and deployed it in the war.

On March 30 the Japanese blew up a bridge on the road to Kohima, thirty miles from Imphal. Barring the road from Silchar in the west, Imphal was cut off from that day. The Japanese army now came within eight miles of Imphal, the capital of Manipur.

Then, the commander of the Fourth Corps, General Jeffrey Scoons, ordered the 20 division to retreat to Tengopal, behind Morey town in the south.

All this while, the 31 division of the Japanese army was rapidly advancing towards Kohima. In Kohima at that time was just a British garrison of 3,500 troops, and in Dimapur not even a garrison. To save Dimapur the Fifth Indian Division and the Third Special Service Brigade were brought over by air from Arakan. When the 161 Brigade of the Fifth Division reached Dimapur on March 29, it was told to go to Kohima. Then the seventh Indian Division from Arakan was brought to the Kohima-Imphal battlefront by the Chittagong road. The 3 Special Service Brigade was stationed at Imphal to prevent any attack from Silchar in the west.

In the Kohima-Imphal sector the 33 Corps of Lieutenant General Montague Stopford came to manage the front. In southern Imphal, 104 kilometers from Kohima, the 4 Corps of Lieutenant General Jeffrey Scoons was already on the alert. By

the end of March the Second Infantry Division of the British army began being flown to Dimapur. In the beginning of April a tank regiment and the 268 Indian Motorised Brigade too reached there.

Then came the 23 Chindit Brigade. The Assam Regiment and para-military troops of Assam Rifles, were already standing ready in Kohima, along with two regiments of the Nepalese army, and one of the Burmese army, and many other units, big and small. British army personnel thus packed the war front. The Second Division composed of English soldiers only brought over so many motor vehicles that the narrow Dimapur-Kohima road was jammed, standing bumper to bumper. Thereupon, the commander of the 14 corps, Field Marshal Slim, ordered that the vehicles be driven back to make room for the troops to pass on foot.

Only one Japanese division was in action in Kohima — 31 of Major General Sato.

On April 5, 58 regiment of this 31 division took control of Kohima village, close to Kohima town. A Captain of its 11 Company, Sunio Sanukawe, wrote in his diary: "We entered Kohima at four o'clock in the morning. Pacifying the sentries (of the British army) we took control of seven food depots and 130 trucks. The enemy (on the hill opposite) did not see us taking control. At nine in the morning when British soldiers came to the depot to take rations, we caught them and made them prisoners."

Another member of the same Company, Navoje Kavoyashi, wrote: "Marching day and night, when we reached Kohima we were dead tired. On reaching, our troops fell asleep where they sat to rest. When dawn broke we saw that the enemy garrison

on the hill in front did not know that we had entered Kohima, they were walking about at ease."

After a few hours of rest the regiment attacked British positions in front and took control, first of the GPT (General Purposes Transport) Hill, and then the nearby Jail Hill. The British garrison on the hill was practically besieged by Sato's forces. Taking control of Kohima village in the north, the GPT ridge and the jail hill in the southwest, the Japanese army dug bunkers and set up its position in strength.

What was the Kohima battle front like?

Situated on a hill of 4,500 feet height, shaped like the back of a horse, linking two ranges, Kohima town is not only beautiful, but it was the best spot to test military skills. It was open on all sides, and the view from it lay clear for miles, without obstruction. Towards its south-western horizon was the Japvu peak, 10,000 feet high. Below it was the Pulebaze summit and then the Aaradura slope. Beyond Pulebaze, to the left, was the Mao settlement from where the frontier of Manipur state began. From there the motor road went to Imphal and Burma.

At the other end, northward, lay Kohima village, and on heights further were the villages of Merema and Nirema. To the east was Jessami village, through which the first platoon of the 31 Division of the Japanese army had reached Kohima.

To climb to this Kohima horseback, the road from Dimapur below, skirting paddy fields and bamboo forests, climbed slopes to the hospital and reached a tri-junction of Kohima town. The road then turned left, passed the Treasury, went through the entire length of the bazaar, reached a junction, turned slightly left and began the climb to the village. If one walked

straight on, the road would pass below the high school three miles away, turn north to Merema and then took you on to the Lotha country, and further on to the Ao region, a hundred miles away.

In the middle of the bazaar, a little above the road, was the open vegetable and meat market, where a variety of greens brought from the forest were sold, along with hornet hives four meters in circumference, legs and heads of deer and sometimes monkey meat. Above the road was the Mission Compound and a school run by the Baptist Church and then began the big village of Kohima.

The Kohima Hill united two ranges: the Merema range in the north and Pulebaze in the southwest. Both had been occupied by the Japanese.

To the east lay a narrow jeep road to Jessami on which the first platoons of the 31 Japanese Division reached Kohima.

At the tri junction in the back, the road circled three sides of a hill on which at that time stood the bungalow, garden and tennis court of the British Deputy Commissioner. From there the road headed for Imphal, 86 kilometres away. At this spot now stands a large cemetery, built by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, in which soldiers who died in the Kohima battle lie buried. Half a kilometer ahead, on a ledge lies the Garrison Hill, where British forces were stationed. Then came Kuki Picket at a high level and the Field Supply Depot (FSD), a little below which were the Daily Issue Stores (DIS), the Jail Hill and the General Purposes Transport (GPT) Ridge. Then began the Aradura-Pulebaze range.

This was the area of the historic Kohima front, where the fate of the Second World War in the east was decided.

To defend it, on the GPT (General Purposes Transport) Hill stood a united force of Indians, Gurkhas, and some troops of the Assam Regiment. South of it, on the road going to Imphal, some Gurkha troops stood to prevent movement on it. To the west, upon a hill was the jail, a garrison company and a rifle company. On the DIS (Daily Issue Store) and FSD (Field Supply Depot) Hills stood two platoons of the Marathas, a mixed Indian rifle company, some troops of the Indian Supply Corps, one Indian Transport Company and the 'V' force (Regional Troops) was on the Kuki Picket. British troops were at the Deputy Commissioner's bungalow and along the ledge to the hospital hill below, along with units of the Assam Rifles. On Summerhouse Hill stood some state troops.

The following priorities were given to Major General Rankin, commander of the Kohima-Dimapur front in the beginning, by Field Marshal William Slim, commander of British forces in the east: 1. Defence of Dimapur, 2. Safeguarding the railway line, 3. Forming a strong base at Dimapur and posting fast action units capable of launching attacks anywhere any time, and 4. Saving Kohima.

Saving Kohima was its last priority.

When the Indian 161 Brigade was brought by air from Arakan to Dimapur, it was sent on March 29 to save the Kohima garrison, and from there it was sent forward to Jassami to halt the Japanese march towards Kohima. Within 24 hours new orders came asking it to forget the problems of Kohima, return to Dimapur and station itself immediately at Nichugard, eight miles to the south. The Brigade Commander, D.F.W. Warren, broke into a fit of anger at this order. Kohima was on the verge of being taken and Dimapur then was in no danger of being attacked.

Spreading from Merema village to Pulebaze hill, the Kohima range was a natural barrier to Japanese advance. If security arrangements were slackened here, the way for Japanese to enter Dimapur and the nearby Brahmaputra valley would be open. The 161 Brigade was being made to do exactly this by ordering it to leave the Kohima theatre and go back to Dimapur!

On April 4 another order came for the return of the brigade to Kohima, to be ready for action.

On April 5, in a night attack the Japanese destroyed some entrenchments of the British in the lower part of the Deputy Commissioner's hill and took them over.

Because of the bombardment by the British Air Force and the absence of their own air force, the Japanese had to carry out their attacks at night, which resulted in much loss of life. In their attack of the 5-6th of April the Japanese took over the water sources of the British. The British Air Force then filled rubber tubes of lorry tyres with water, air-dropped them to Kohima garrison and saved it from dying of thirst. Water was rationed. Less than a pint per soldier and slightly more for the wounded, daily.

After taking over Kohima village on April 5, units of the 58 regiment of the Japanese army attacked the jail hill opposite and took it over. On April 6, the Commander of the 161 Brigade, Brigadier Warren, set up a box at Jotsoma village, two kilometers from Kohima, with two regiments of Rajputs and Punjabis under his command, and eight cannons. This proved a very useful and practical step in the defence of Kohima.

On the night of the same day, April 6, the second and fifth companies of the Japanese 58 regiment attacked the DIS and FSD Hills. The cannons installed at Jotsoma a day ago

came to good use and a thick curtain of their shells stopped the first wave of the Japanese attack. Many Japanese soldiers were blown up, but a few managed to get through the curtain and advanced. Then, firing machine-guns and throwing hand grenades from the trenches on the hill, a Maratha platoon and a mixed company of Indian troops stopped the second and third wave of Japanese attack. A fourth wave came. With each wave the Japanese advanced further. Reaching the top of the hill they came upon stockpiles of grenades stored in bamboo huts. They used them to attack the 'C' company of the 161 Brigade, which had come to halt the Japanese advance.

When dawn broke, it was found that the Japanese had taken control of houses with ten big ovens for making Indian bread or roti. Royal West Kent Company then tied explosives to eight foot long bamboo poles and set fire to bamboo huts taken over by the Japanese. The whole hillside was on fire. Some Japanese hid in the ovens. Then Lance Naik John Harman of the Royal West Kent brought over a box of grenades, threw them one by one into each oven and killed the enemy.

In the course of the battle, a company of the 47 Rajputana Rifles broke through the Japanese cordon and entered Kohima from Jotsoma.

Minor attacks were made by the Japanese on the night of April 7. That night the Japanese brought into use a new weapon. A loudspeaker near the Treasury suddenly began blaring out in Urdu: "Soldiers of India: The Japanese army has surrounded you. Pick up your arms and come over to us! We will free India from the tyranny of British rule!"

An Indian soldier rained bullets in that direction but failed to stop the loudspeaker from making the appeal throughout

the night. One did not know what the Indian soldiers thought of the appeal, but none left their post in the trenches.

The Japanese carried out their attack on well guarded heights with great courage and at great risk to life. To ease the tension before an attack, a lieutenant of the Second Japanese Battalion, Seisaku Kamayama, began telling a joke to his troops standing by to attack, most of whom were young: "Keep your minds cool and under control! To know how cool your mind is, put your hand in the pocket of your trousers and touch your penis. If it has not shrunk too much and is hanging well, you are all right. If it has shrunk too much it means you are afraid!"

He then put his hand into his trousers and declared, "I am all alright!"

One of his soldiers said, "Sir! Mine is not there! Where could it have gone?" Everyone laughed.

Seeing them laugh the officer felt he had their confidence.

Of the thirty men only seventeen survived the attack.

On April 8 the Japanese army with great speed brought over anti-tank guns to the GPT Hill, and began firing them rapidly. British troops did not have the time to jump back into trenches to save themselves. The same day it came to be known that the Japanese had cut off the road coming from Dimapur, below Kohima, near Zubja. Then the 161 brigade of Warren was surrounded. As soon as night fell, the Japanese attacked the high ground beside the hospital and the Deputy Commissioner's hill. Attempts were made to stop them with mortar fire but waves of Japanese troops climbed the steep heights with ladders, pushed back the troops of the garrison and took over the eastern end of the Deputy Commissioner's

tennis court. Efforts to drive them back with grenades were unsuccessful. On the morning of April 9 the Japanese fought without respite to expand their area of control and a counter attack by Assam and Burmese regiments did not help in regaining the lost area. April 9 was Easter Sunday. On that sacred day Japanese artillery bombardment killed 40 wounded soldiers lying in the open.

Heavy rain of that night solved the problem of water shortage of the garrison. Trenches overflowed but the battle did not stop. At Jotsoma too, in an area guarded by Punjabis, many clashes took place and the British entrenchment was on the verge of collapse.

At ten o'clock at night the Japanese launched a new offensive from the eastern end of the Deputy Commissioner's tennis court. Hand grenades flew like tennis balls to and fro and at one time the area under the British shrank to 25 yards.

A second attack was launched a little lower down, in the hospital area, but it was arrested by Assam Rifles stationed there.

It was the fifth day of the siege of Kohima. All the slopes were covered with bodies of British, Indian and Japanese soldiers and over the blackening, bloating, putrefying corpses hovered thick clouds of flies. The stench made breathing difficult. There was a shortage of spades with the Assam Rifles and other Indian units. The British Royal West Kent Regiment refused to lend its spades for burying the dead.

The British Second Division called ten days ago to save Kohima was still down in Dimapur.

The garrison at Kohima thought it would perish in the attacks.

On April 10, the listless commander of the 161 Brigade at Jotsoma, Brigadier Warren, sent a wireless message to Major General John Grover of the 2nd Division, being brought to save Kohima, asking him to order the remaining troops in Kohima to retreat four miles down! Grover did not accept.

On April 11 two brigades of 2 Division reached Zubja village, ten miles below Kohima. Ahead, the road was cut by Japanese so the brigades stayed put in Zubja. From Merema in the east, the Japanese artillery targeted them, killing their padre, one officer, one company commander, and wounding many sergeants, corporals and soldiers.

Then tanks were sent for, as also bombers of the Royal Air Force, so that they could finish off the Japanese troops occupying the road they had cut. Brigadier Hawkins ran his eyes over the hills nearby and was aghast at the sheer size of the valleys, peaks and ledges and the obstacles they presented. To cross these safely, many more troops would be needed. He was not in favour of sacrificing soldiers for no reason. Guns were made in two days, he used to say, tanks in a week. But to train a soldier in combat took twenty years.

Because the road had been cut, everything—water, medicine and ammunition were being air-dropped by parachutes. Planes of the American Air Force dropped mistakenly a consignment of mortar-bombs and grenades to a Japanese-controlled area. Three-inch mortars fell into the hands of General Sato's troops, which had earlier seized mortar guns from the British during the past few days. With them, they targeted the British.

The Japanese had occupied areas on the Garrison Hill. On April 13 the DIS Hill also passed into their control. From there they rained mortar bombs on the Dressing Station, in

which two doctors were killed and many were wounded, some seriously. At night they attacked FSD Hill. Many Japanese troops broke into the trenches and fought hand to hand the whole night.

On April 14, the bridge near Zubja which the Japanese had destroyed, blocking the road, was repaired and the road was opened. Major General Grover who was being accused of slow progress, said he could not advance and attack Kohima because many of his units were 36 miles away, between Dimapur and Zubja. Corps Commander Stafford was ordering him to forget about defending the road and advance.

At night the Japanese again attacked the hill on which the Deputy Commissioner's bungalow stood. A Garo soldier of the mixed company of Assam Rifles and Assam Regiment, Wellington Massaar, climbed the billiard table of the bungalow and stopped the Japanese advance by raining bullets from his bren gun. Then Nayak Dilhoo Angami and two more soldiers rained hand grenades on the Japanese who were bringing in machine guns. In the middle of this, Masssar's bren gun jammed. A bullet hit him and he fell off the table. Mending his bren, in his wounded state he dragged the gun to the window and kept firing from there, defending the bungalow until a party of grenadiers arrived. He died within a month of his wounds.

On the 17th night the FSD Hill was attacked and so was Kuki Picket at two thirty a.m, and taken control of. But the attack was stopped. Had it not been, the Japanese would have taken over Garrison Hill and the whole of Kohima.

From eight a.m on the morning of April 18 cannons of the Second Division began hitting Japanese from Zubja. The British Air Force planes began bombing Japanese positions. The

1/4 Panjab Battalion with tanks moved forward to 45th mile and shot the Japanese blocking the road, breaking the blockade and entered Kohima garrison.

The Japanese had surrounded the garrison on April 6. Their blockade was broken twelve days later.

But the Kohima war did not stop. The Japanese still held Kuki Picket, some other hills, the Treasury, and Kohima village.

The 31 Japanese Division was fighting in Kohima with great bravery. To stop it from entering the Brahmaputra Valley the British were bringing in almost a battalion a day to the theatre.

After taking over nine tenths of Kohima and fighting for a full month, the Japanese 31 division was left with no rations or ammunition. General Sato had been requesting the commander and senior officers of the 15 Japanese Army in Burma to send food and ammunition. "We cannot go on otherwise", he reported.

Not getting a reply, in desperation he repeated his plea to Major General Tajoi, the commander of the Japanese 5 Air Force Division. He too did nothing. Sato, angry now, sent a signal to General Mutaguchi on May 27, saying: "After leaving Chindwin (Burma) two months ago for fighting in this campaign, we have not received from you a single bullet or a grain of rice. We are facing attacks continuously. Kindly send food rations by air. Not only rations and war material, the enemy has new army units coming here by air."

When this too resulted in nothing, Sato informed Mutaguchi that his division would withdraw.

Mutaguchi's reply came: "If you withdraw I'll have you

court marshalled." And then Sato sent his celebrated signal: "You can do what you like! I'll drag you along with me!"

On May 31, after ordering his army to withdraw, he sent a signal to Mutaguchi: "The fighting capability of the 15 corps (Mutaguchi's, which included Sato's troops in Kohima) is lower than that of cadets." And then he shut down his radio communication.

Watching his remaining soldiers tired and starving leave Kohima, he wrote to his wife: "I am not able to see the enemy because of my tears."

Mutaguchi was making preparations for attacking Palel in Manipur and he wanted to use the 31 Division of Sato for the attack.

At the start of the campaign, Mutaguchi had assured Sato that his 31 Division would function independently on the Kohima front for no more than 50 days, from March 15 to May 5. It was arranged that from the first day of the campaign, the 15 Corps would send it four tons of ammunition daily, and rations for the first 25 days, i.e from March 15 to April 8, amounting to 250 tons. Sato took about 15,000 men with him and reported that the supplies and food he was taking with him would last until April 5 only. When no supplies came until May 4, Sato sent a signal to the Japanese Army commander in Burma, that the 15 corps was not fulfilling its obligations to the 31 Division, and he had received no supplies. By April 16, all supplies had stopped. Prior to that some supplies did trickle in on mule back. The 31 division was forced to kill the animals that brought them and eat them.

Would the Delhi Campaign of the Japanese have been successful?

The commander of the 33 Division in Imphal, Lieutenant General Yanagida did not have the least confidence in this campaign. He did not believe that supplies from food depots, thousands of miles away, would reach his troops in time. His calculations were right, for after three months the supplies finished and the army began dying of hunger.

Yanagida knew that the campaign would be putting Japan in difficulties and the situation would turn against it. He told the commander in Burma, General Mutaguchi, to give up the idea of marching on to Delhi.

But at that time the Japanese had established control over the Kabaw valley on Manipur border. The British forces were retreating towards Imphal. Seeing this, Mutaguchi thought Yanagida was not the right man for the campaign and he asked for a young and strong commander. Six weeks later Lieutenant General Nobu Tanaka took over from Yanagida.

A Japanese staff officer, Colonel Hayashi, was of the view that before the British brought in troops to save besieged Imphal, the Japanese army should have taken control of it.

But the Japanese commanders in charge of the campaign decided that before the attack their tired and exhausted troops should rest for a while, and also thought it necessary to tighten up the army organization. Mutaguchi wanted to by-pass Imphal-Kohima and take over the food and war material stored in the British-American depots in Dimapur. He sent some troops to Dimapur from the Kohima theatre. But the Supreme Commander of the Japanese southern army, Count Tirouchi, wanted to establish control over Imphal-Kohima first, and then go over to Dimapur, further away. He ordered the units advancing towards Dimapur to return to Kohima..

Because of this wrangling within the Japanese army the British got the time to bring over men from their army bases in India. In addition to rail and road routes for bringing them, an air bridge was set up with 400 planes.

Field Marshal William Slim's book, '*Defeat into Victory*' is a beautifully written account of this war and has become a text book in many military schools. He has come down hard on General Sato, Commander of the 31 Japanese Division. He says that of all the Japanese generals he faced, Sato was the most unenthusiastic and inactive. He was obsessed with one single idea—take control of Kohima. It never struck him to reach Dimapur by advancing from Nichugard, and cut the railway line, thereby dealing the British a knockout blow.

"I owe my life to Sato", he wrote.

Possibly when Slim wrote his book and published it, he did not know that it was General Kawabe who stopped Sato from taking over Dimapur and asked him to call back his troops advancing in that direction. The mistake was that of the Japanese army as a whole and not of Sato.

In 1942 when Slim was the British Divisional Commander in Burma, it was this very Sato and his troops which had routed him from there. But in 1944, when he became the commander of the 14 Army, engaged in saving Kohima-Dimapur, how was it that he had not known that Sato's men, advancing from Kohima had covered half the distance to Dimapur?

The kind of fierce battles that raged in a small place like Kohima were not fought in many other places. With fixed bayonets the British-Indian troops and the Japanese Army fought for every inch. Not a single soldier of the exhausted Japanese army surrendered. Indian soldiers had to kill them one by one.

The fierce battle of Kohima was a decisive one of the Second World War.

This war was not only going to rouse political consciousness in Southeast Asia, it was to be an intrinsic and inalienable part of the history of Nagas. Every inch of the 50 square mile area of Kohima was fought over. No such war was fought anywhere else in India.

On jungle tracks the British used Naga porters to carry their equipment and also their dead and injured to motor vehicles. Normally both the British and the Japanese kept track of each other's movement by making enquiries from Nagas. The British who had ruled for 60 years the Naga territory were able to make special use of the local population.

The Commander of the Second Division of the British army, Major General John Grover, had assured the Nagas that the British would not cause damage to their villages by bombing and other military activities, provided no Japanese soldiers were hidden there. The Nagas thereupon agreed to lend them 300 men whose task was to help the British in patrolling. But the British did not give rifles to Nagas for participating in the war. The Japanese also came to Naga villages to make enquiries about the presence of British troops.

In the big house of my in-laws in Kohima, Japanese soldiers came and searched every room and asked a question that consisted of a single word: Soldier? Soldier? Which meant if any British soldier was hiding there?

Since the Kohima battle many changes have taken place in methods of warfare. Both sides—the Japanese, and the British with Indian troops—drove their bayonets into each other, killing many. Besides face to face fighting, killing with cannons and mortar was common. It is one thing to drive bayonets into

bodies and another to kill invisible unseen soldiers with long-range weapons. The practice of killing unseen soldiers from far away became common after that war.

I was in Hanoi at the time of carpet bombing of northern Vietnam by the Americans in December 1972. It meant raining bombs on cities and creating a carpet of destruction. Flying at 30,000 feet in the sky, beyond the reach of missiles, B-52 bombers of American air force dropped so many bombs on the railway station and yards of Hanoi, and on Haiphong harbour that these densely populated places looked like ploughed fields. When pilots of the B-52s, maps spread over thighs, reached the targeted area, they pressed buttons to open the bomb hatches and bombs weighing 3,000 pounds fell to destroy cities, ports, railway stations and heavily populated areas and flattened them. Then the pilots listening to Jimmy Hadrix, flew back to Guam, their base in the Pacific. How many died in the bombing was not their concern.

Digging and counting bodies buried in the rubble took the North Vietnamese days.

I also remember Baghdad, the capital of Iraq, in the Gulf War of 1991. An Americans cruise missile (a weapon like a small plane laden with explosives, which follows data stored in it, which searches and destroys its target) fired from a naval ship hundreds of kilometers away, shot through Rashid Hotel where I and some journalists were staying, damaging some rooms and finally exploding somewhere nearby. According to Americans, Rashid Hotel was not its target but a large electric station of Baghdad.

Other Cruise missiles destroyed Baghdad's electricity supply stations and water reservoirs. Some went off course and killed Iraqis in hospitals, schools and homes.

The same happened during American invasion of Iraq in 2003.

I want to write only on two aspects of the Kohima war. (The whole story of that war is long.)

1. Kohima was saved from the Japanese by mostly Indian troops. If they had not fought there bravely the British garrison would not have lasted even a couple of days. The British 2nd Division which had been brought to save it, took 20 days to reach Kohima from Dimapur, 75 kilometers away, and from Zubja to Kohima which was just over ten kilometers, a whole ten days. It did not take part in any major battle, nor capture any crucial point. It just dragged its feet. The battle of Kohima which started on April 5, went on for 64 days. The Division's fighting was so unsatisfactory and Major General John Grover had to be taken off its command.
2. The Japanese lost this battle because of differences among their commanders. Not because of the British army.

The British appreciated the heroism of Indian troops there. But to them Indians were colonial people. In the fighting for the bungalow of the British Deputy Commissioner on April 17, Wellington Massar, a Garo tribesman of the Assam Regiment, after being shot and wounded dragged his bren gun to the window of the bungalow and kept firing until his colleagues returned to stop Japanese advance. Massar died of his injuries within a month. For this courage and supreme sacrifice of his the British gave him the lowly Indian Distinguished Service Medal!

On April 18, in the same battle for the bungalow, the Japanese, after an all-night battle took over some trenches from soldiers of the Punjab Regiment, who fought valiantly. At the crack of dawn a non-commissioned officer (Jamadar) of the Panjab Regiment, Mohammad Rafiq, set out with a platoon after the deaths of all his three section commanders, attacked the Japanese, killed 16 of them and recaptured all the trenches, performing a heroic task and saving the campaign. He was given Military Cross!

On April 8, an initial day of the same Kohima battle, Corporal John Herman of the Royal West Kent Regiment, received the highest military award for bravery, the Victoria Cross.

There were many stories of the bravery of Indian soldiers. But their regiments were led by British officers! Do Indians perform outstanding deeds only under the leadership of others?

Chapter 14

Azad Hind Fauj in Nagaland

The Nagas witnessed the Second World War in their land with amazement. From Imphal to Kohima it was fought in their area. After pushing the British out of Burma, the Japanese had come to Naga country. Japanese soldiers looked like the Nagas, copper complexioned, stocky, strong as build, eating rice and beef just like Nagas. Totally different from the red-faced English. They had expelled the British from Burma and made them retreat 1,000 miles. They were the same people who, 64 years ago, had colonized the Nagas with the strength of their guns. They still had the gun, but were on the run.

The Nagas found that the British were not invincible. People who looked like the Nagas were defeating them. The Nagas knew nothing about the Japanese. The Japanese did not want anything from the Nagas. They only wanted to pass through their country, to get to India.

During the war political forces in Burma and its militant nationalist leaders such as Aung San had come to an agreement with the Japanese on a common front against the British.

India's Subhash Chandra Bose had roused nationalist feelings among Indians in Singapore, Malaya, Sumatra, Java and Siam (Thailand) in his fight against the British and assisted

the Japanese. For this task he had assembled thousands of Indian Soldiers in Singapore and Malaya who had surrendered to the Japanese earlier, and formed the Azad Hind Fauj (Free army of India) and was leading it.

It was said that Zapuphizo, the Naga leader, living in Rangoon at that time, had promised to assist Subhash Chandra Bose in liberating the Naga country along with India.

Azad Hind Fauj had entered the Naga country with the Japanese army. It helped the Japanese in May 1944 in attacking Palel, a British airstrip in Manipur. But it failed to establish itself as an effective fighting force.

In most campaigns in Burma and Manipur, elements of the Azad Hindi Fauj assisted the Japanese. Its members addressed British Indian soldiers in Urdu-Hindi over loudspeakers: "Soldiers of India! Do not fight for the British and come over to us. Together we will free India!" Their task was to stop Indian troops from fighting the Japanese. The Japanese had told the INA men that Indian soldiers of the British army would not fire on them when they know that they were fighting for the freedom of India. But this did not work. When soldiers of Bose's Azad Hind Fauj advanced to attack the Palel airstrip in Manipur, Indian troops under the British opened fire on them.

In March 1942, a whole division of the Azad Hind Fauj was sent with the Japanese army to the Kohima-Imphal sector. Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose's orders to it were to liberate a corner of India and plant free India's flag there. To accomplish this, it was necessary for INA to occupy Kohima, Imphal or any corner of India.

In May 1942 the Japanese had planned to drive the British out of Burma, establish their troops on the banks of the

Chindwin river and then advance towards India. Accordingly, in March 1944, the 31st Division of the Japanese army set out to occupy Kohima. Another division, the 16th, was sent to occupy Imphal. With them marched three units of the Azad Hind Fauj, consisting of 150 to 200 men, whose task was to guide, propagate, interpret and gather intelligence. From Arakan too a similar Indian unit of 250 men was sent with the Japanese army.

Besides these, three regiments of the Azad Hind Fauj, one consisting of 3,000 soldiers—the Subhash Regiment—and the second and third of 2,000 soldiers each, were sent in March to Burma under Shahnawaz Khan. In two months of war, by the end of May, only three companies of the six belonging to the second and third regiments had survived. Then they were sent to Kohima to assist the Japanese. Shahnawaz came up to Ukhrul in Naga country of Manipur.

The second and third Indian regiments, walking on either side of the Japanese forces, were to take control of the Tamu-Palel Road by May, June and July. The Second Regiment, which had attacked the Palel airstrip in May, was bloodied and unsuccessful. Some of its troops ran away. Some fell ill and some died of hunger. When it was ordered to retreat, only 520 men survived of its 2,000. The third, at the end of May, reached the war theatre when heavy rains had set in. It did not have to fight much. Its members too died in large numbers of malaria and starvation. The Japanese called them 'malaria units'.

On June 20, Shahnawaz Khan ordered his regiment to retreat from Ukhrul. (Ukhrul, Naga territory of Manipur, is in a mountainous region.) The Third Regiment's rations finished. In the course of retreat more than 200 of its soldiers died of

starvation and illness. The Japanese army was then very short of supplies and rations.

In September-October, when counting was done, it was found that of the 6,000 men of the Azad Hind Fauj who had been sent to fight in the Imphal-Kohima sector, only 2,600 managed to survive and retreat. Of these 2,000 had to be sent straight to hospital. Seven hundred and fifteen of the 6,000 had run away, 400 were killed and 800 surrendered. About 1,500 died of hunger and disease.

With them died the dreams of 300,000 men of the Azad Hind Fauj standing on the banks of the Brahmaputra and shouting in victory of making India independent.

Many harsh truths lie behind the failure of the Fauj.

Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose roused and united Indians in Burma, Malaya and Singapore. Indian women there donated their jewellery and men their cash to him. Many enlisted in Netaji's army. They were mostly Tamil, whose forebearers had been brought to Malaya and Singapore by the British to tap rubber trees. On joining Netaji's army they were given some military training and sent on the difficult task of carrying out assaults for which they were not well prepared.

Major Fujihara, a liaison officer of General Mutaguchi, with whose force the Azad Hind Fauj soldiers were attached, wrote: "This revolutionary force was good as far as strength of mind and organization was concerned, but its training, ability and officers corps were of low standard. They lacked aggressiveness and drive."

They also did not have enough weapons. For artillery support during fighting they were dependent on the Japanese. They did not have wireless sets, vehicles or telephones. All they had were light machine guns and rifles. Their uniform was

khaki, like that of British soldiers earlier, while that of Japanese and British troops' was jungle light green. Fujihara wrote that they guarded lengths of the road to Palel and Imphal, which was of help to Japanese campaign.

On July 10, 1944, the Japanese informed Netaji that they were retreating from the Imphal-Kohima campaign. It was then that he learnt about the lack of success of the Azad Hind Fauj. Of the 6,000 Indian troops in his Imphal campaign, 1,500 had either run away or had been caught.

In Rangoon Netaji had formed an Indian government-in-exile and he was not aware of the failure of the Azad Hind Fauj. . When it became known, Netaji thought: "Well, the liberation of India will now probably take two more years."

The Azad Hind Fauj was also unable to enter India from Akyab in Burma. The British had re-established control over the coastal area.

After the Kohima-Imphal campaign, the Azad Hind Fauj took part in the battle on the banks of the river Irrawady, along with the retreating Japanese army. Netaji himself reached Burma for this battle, on January 12. The Fourth Guerrilla Regiment under Major Gurdial Singh Dhillon (formerly Lieutenant in the 1/14 Punjab Regiment of the British Army) was told to defend a 12-mile long stretch of road south of Nyangu, until the rest of the Fauj's Division, which included its First and Second Regiments, came from Rangoon and joined it. Dhillon had a total of 1,200 troops, too small a number to defend a stretch of 12 miles along the banks of the river. These 1,200 men started digging trenches on February 6, for defence. Nearby, to the south, was the city of Pagaan. There they saw Indian troops of the British army crossing the river and 140 of Dhillon's men

surrendered to them. The rest retreated 35 miles to the south and went to Chakdong.

Netaji was distraught and angry, hearing the news of the surrender of Dhillon's men. He had a letter sent to his police in Mandalay through General Shahnawaz, saying: "I hear that our men who ran away leaving the front are still in Mandalay area. Arrest them immediately and send them to Rangoon. If they cannot be arrested shoot them."

On February 18, Dhillon tried to gather his scattered troops. He could collect only 400 of 1,200. And these too had lost their military discipline.

Shahnawaz sent this news to Netaji at Meytila on February 25.

Thereupon, the Second Regiment of the Azad Hind Fauj under Lieutenant Colonel P.K. Sehgal (formerly captain in the 2/50 Baluch Regiment of the British) was sent there. He was ordered to set up camps on the northern and eastern sides of Popa Hill, 5,000 feet high, and defend it.

When the British army crossed Popa Hill and kept advancing, and there was the danger of it cutting the road to Rangoon from Meytila and the Japanese army getting surrounded and taken prisoner, Netaji and Shahnawaz set off for Rangoon in a vehicle laden with arms and ammunition. There, on March 2, they received more distressing news. Five staff officers of the Second Battalion at Popa had run away leaving notes saying the Azad Hind Fauj should surrender at once. The British force made copies of the notes and dropped them from the air.

A series of surrenders then occurred.

On May 13, 50 troops of Shahnawaz and Dhillon surrendered in Pegu and thereby brought to an end the battle of the Azad Hind Fauj.

Then, under the leadership of Major General Loganathan the remaining soldiers of the Azad Hind Fauj left in Rangoon surrendered to the British and Netaji left for Singapore. On May 3, the oldest British prisoner in Rangoon jail was accepted as the representative of the British and told to disarm the Azad Hind Fauj troops and gather them at one place. The following day, on May 4, the 26 Indian Division of the British Army reached Rangoon and took over the city.

When Japan surrendered on August 14, Netaji was in Singapore. He was to go to Bangkok, and then to Saigon and Taiwan (Formosa), to fly to Japan in a Japanese military plane. On August 16, the Japanese plane carrying him from Taiwan, met with an accident, crashed and Netaji perished, it was stated.

In Rangoon 750 Indian soldiers of the British army who had surrendered to the Japanese in Singapore and later formed the Azad Hind Fauj, were taken captive, arrested and sent to India on ships. After this, Indian soldiers of the Fauj caught in Rangoon, Thailand and Malaya were also sent to India. Around 17,000 were made prisoners of war and brought to India where they were tried for treason.

On May 4, 1945, the British fully recaptured Rangoon and restored their regime there. Among their task was finding those who had supported the Japanese and cooperated with them in Burma. Zapuphizo was among those caught. After lodging him in a Rangoon jail for some time he was sent to a Calcutta jail.

From there he went to Kohima. In Rangoon it was thought of liberating the Naga country and India of British rule. The sponsors of this idea were Zapuphizo and leaders of the Azad Hind Fauj. Both had sought the help of the Japanese army which was advancing towards India.

Chapter 15

Delhi Talks

In January 1966, Lal Bahadur Shastri died at Tashkent. On January 19, and the Congress Parliamentary Party chose Indira Gandhi as its new leader against Morarji Desai. To see who would be the next prime minister, I came to Delhi from Kohima. So did Chaliha, the Assam Chief Minister. In those days, Chief Ministers instructed parliament members of their states whom to vote for. Assam had 14 members of parliament. All of them, on Chaliha's instructions and voted for Mr. Morarji Desai, who lost.

Since Nehru's days I was on friendly terms with Mrs. Indira Gandhi. On returning from Cairo, after resigning my newspaper job and before going to Kohima, I had gone to see her in 1964. She had told me: "Don't leave your secure and stable newspaper job on Shastriji's advice. The government is not run by him but by three secretaries, his own Secretary Lakshmikant Jha, the Cabinet Secretary Dharma Vira, and the Home Secretary, Ladli Prasad Singh." She said, "No matter what Shastriji may say, everything will depend on what these three decide. And you don't know what these three will think of you. Don't, therefore, go off to Kohima leaving your job because Shastriji is asking you to.

Leaders of National Socialist Council of Nagalim,
Isak Swu (in middle) Mr. Th. Muiva (right) with author (left)

Abani, Prabat, Mrs. Gandhi (Sandhya behind) Tarani after breakfast at Mrs. Indira Gandhi's residence, at 1, Safdarjung Road, New Dehli, From left: Harish Chandola, Prabhat, Mrs. Gandhi, Sandhya, Tarani, Mrs. Mene Chandola

"In the recent past, do you know whom Shastriji sent to the U.S. and the Soviet Union, to explain India's position on its recent Pakistan war? S.K. Patil was sent to the U.S. A few years back, when I went to Washington with Pappu (her father, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru), Dean Rusk, the Secretary of State, said during an informal talk that S.K. Patil was a buffoon. (Patil held many senior ministerial posts and was sent to the U.S.A. on official work many times.) A man whom American leaders considered a buffoon was sent there by Shastriji to explain Indian position!

"And do you know who was sent to Moscow for this purpose? Raja! (Krishna Chandra Pant.) You know he has inherited his father's body (both were large) but not his brains!

"Shastriji never called me even once to discuss relations with Pakistan.

"I'm telling you, don't go to Kohima because Shastriji is asking you to."

A day after she was elected congress leader and Prime Minister, I went to her residence on 1, Safdarjang Road. Many people were there standing under trees in her garden to congratulate her. Seeing me, she said, "I want to talk to you. Sit inside and wait for me."

Coming in, she said: "I am very happy you are in Kohima! Tell your Naga friends that I am not like old leaders. You know that I have been to Kohima and understand the Naga problem. Tell them to come and talk to me."

Returning to Kohima, I went to the Naga camps to convey Indira's invitation. They said "When Shastriji called us we did not go. How can we go now?"

I said, "A new prime minister has taken over in India.

No. 832-MIB/64. New Delhi,
October 1, 1964.

Dear Shri Chandola,

You always manage to be in the right place at the right time - that is, in the centre of excitement.

Being so terribly busy myself - the day's work schedule gets longer and longer - I find it difficult to believe that anybody is without work or cannot find anything to do.

I am afraid after Kohima and all the other places you have been in, you will find any work under me very tame.

Give my greetings to all the people I know in Kohima.

Yours sincerely,

Indira Gandhi

(Indira Gandhi)

Shri Harish Chandola,
C/o Mr. A. Kevichusa,
Mission Compound,
Kohima,
Nagaland.

Leaders from all over are arriving to congratulate her. Your going there will be appreciated."

Accepting the invitations they finally decided to go to Delhi.

To talk with the Prime Minister, a six member Naga delegation set out for Jorhat by jeep from Chidema on February 17. First it travelled 150 kilometers to Jorhar by road, then flew to Calcutta on an Indian Airlines Dakota plane and then from Calcutta to Delhi on a Boeing 737. Evening had set in when they reached the capital and the air was cold. From Calcutta, Chaliha travelled with them. Born in Sibsagar district, next to Naga Hills, Chaliha had excellent relations with Nagas. Despite Naga Hills being directly under the Central Government, Assam continued to be home to Nagas. Chaliha upheld the tradition of making them feel at home. The delegation was his guest and was taken to Assam House in Chanakyapuri, Delhi. After a whole day's journey its members were tired on arrival.

The leader of the delegation was Kughato Sukhai, the prime minister (ato-kilonsar) of the Underground Naga Federal Government. Some Naga tribes have hereditary leaders, while others elect them. Semas have hereditary leaders. Kughato was one. With a round, sunburnt face, of average height, somewhat stocky but of healthy build, he looked a special person and was full of self-confidence.

With him was the Vice-President of the Naga National Council's, aging, ill, small built Imkongmeren: a respected Ao leader, who had given up wealth, business, and family and gone underground to be with men fighting for Naga independence. His health had been declining from living for years in forests. After Zapuphizo he was the second leader of the Naga struggle.

The third member of the delegation was the known and familiar figure, Isak Chishi Swu, Foreign Secretary of the Underground government, tall, thin, with a face of knife edge sharpness, a good speaker of English. Accompanying the delegation were Savijo Angami, secretary to Kughato Sukhai, Choley Chasay, Peace Mission Secretary, and Dali Namo, an Assistant to Mr Imkongmeren (Dali later became a minister in the Nagaland Government and died in 2005).

I accompanied the delegation.

After dinner, on our way to bed, Chaliha asked: "What time would you like your morning tea?" "Five o'clock", said the Nagas, according to their time in Nagaland, where the sun rises an hour and a half before Delhi. At five o'clock in February, Delhi lies in darkness. Tired, somewhat disoriented, the Nagas got up at 7.30 a.m.

As soon as it became light, Isak and I went out for a walk. We had things to talk about—such as visiting the Gandhi Samadhi (his final resting place) to offer flowers there and discuss what kind of flowers to take and where to buy them.

A newspaper vendor on his bicycle passed by. I bought two Delhi English dailies. In both the main story screamed in big bold letters: Nagas plant bombs in the Assam Mail, kill 38, wound 52. The bombs had exploded in Sibsagar district near Kamarbandha Ali station.

Isak was stunned by the news. The Naga delegation had come to Delhi on a courtesy call to offer congratulations to the newly elected Prime Minister. They wanted to make a nice, auspicious beginning. Shastriji had died after inviting them over. To queer the atmosphere some underground men of Angami and Ao tribes decided to demonstrate their strength

MINISTER
INFORMATION & BROADCASTING
INDIA

New Delhi,
3rd June, 19[illegible]5.

Dear Shri [illegible].

Your letter of the 24th has just arrived. In a few hours, I am leaving for London for a week. This is in connection with the Nehru Memorial Exhibition. I have a splitting headache and can hardly see.

I am sorry I did not know you had come to Delhi [illegible]. I wanted to discuss certain matters regarding [illegible]. [illegible] with whom I had a talk about [illegible] for the Conclevia and he has, as you know, a certain set attitude.

Regarding Mr. Mattan, I did not know that this sort of thing happened outside detective novels and I must say that inspite of the church leaders' letter and your own remarks, I find it extremely difficult to believe that anybody would do this sort of thing. However, since the position there is a delicate one, I think it will be best for Mattan to come back, at least to explain what happened. I do not think you should talk to any one about it.

I am glad that the Ministers there are having a good time!!

Yours sincerely,

Shri Hari Chandola,
C/o Shri H.K. Dutta,
[illegible],
Lower La. Chambers,
[illegible].

PRIME MINISTER'S HOUSE,
NEW DELHI.

April 6, 1957.

Dear Mr Chandola,

I was glad to hear from you and to have some news of the countries you have visited. As you perhaps know, I have also been to all these places.

It is true that the South Vietnamese do not like Indians because of our foreign policy. But the police shooting incident which you mention has been fully investigated and it was found that it was our man who was at fault.

The Cambodian matter needs to be watched.

Yours sincerely,

Indira Gandhi

(Indira Gandhi).

Shri Harish Chandola,
Vientaine (Laos).

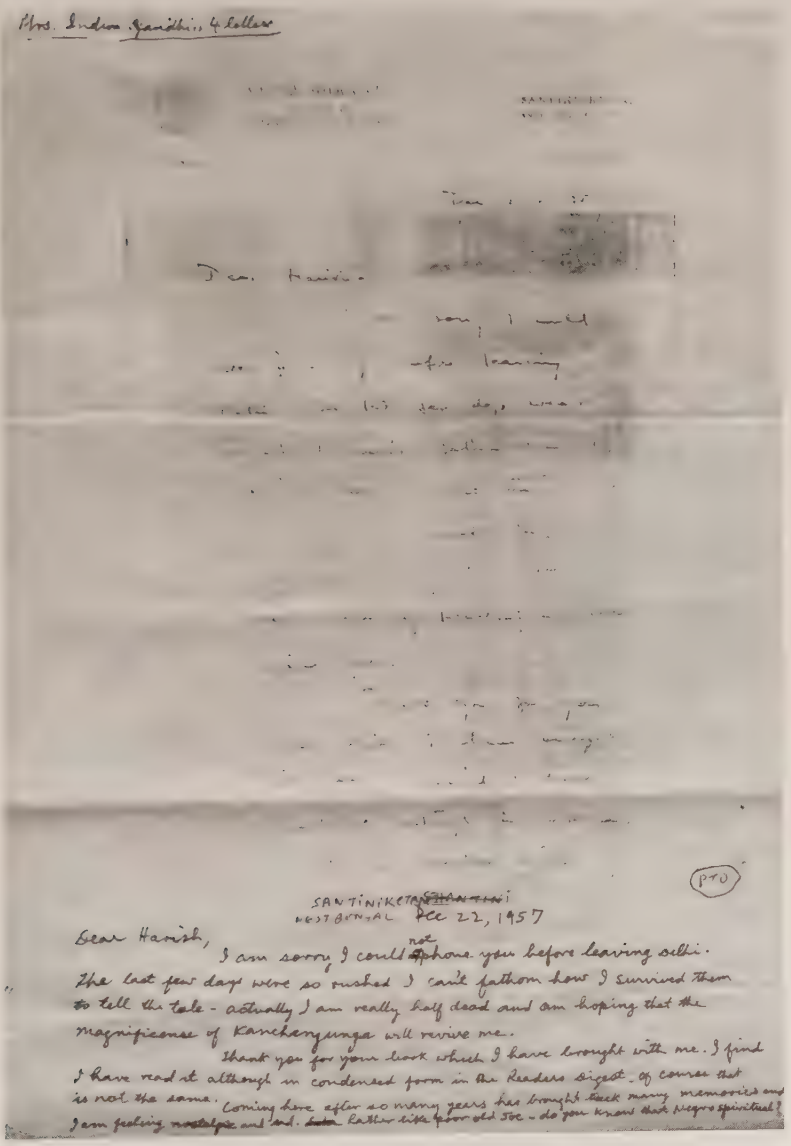


Photo. Indira Gandhi, 4 letters

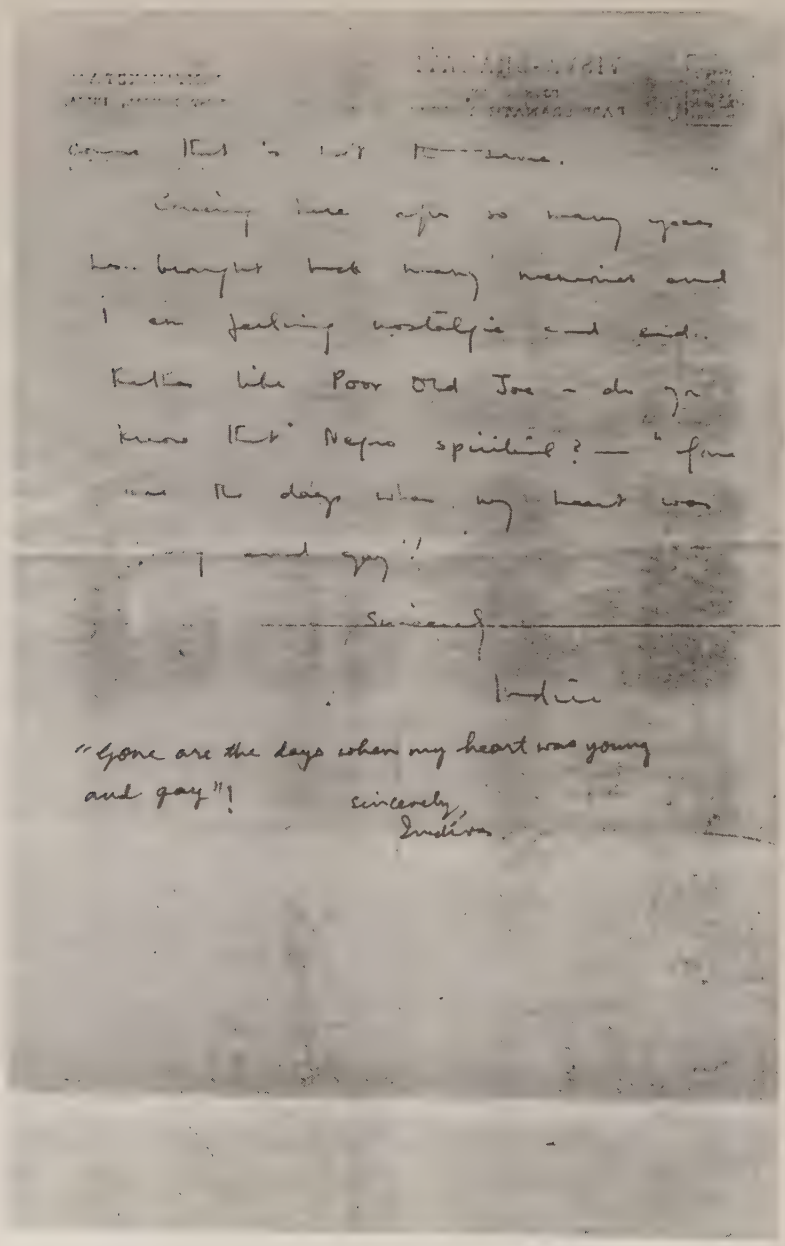
P.T.O.

SANTINIKETAN ~~SHANTHI~~
WEST BENGAL Dec 22, 1957

Dear Harish,

I am sorry I could not phone you before leaving Delhi. The last few days were so rushed I can't fathom how I survived them to tell the tale - actually I am really half dead and am hoping that the magnificence of Kanchenjunga will revive me.

Thank you for your book which I have brought with me. I find I have read it although in condensed form in the Readers digest - of course that is not the same. Coming here after so many years has brought back many memories and I am feeling nostalgic and sad. ~~Sad~~ Rather like your old Joe - do you know that negro spiritual?



"Gone are the days when my heart was young and gay"!

sincerely,
Indira

by bombing a train. There were differences among Nagas over which of their leaders should talk to the Indian Prime Minister. Some, along with Imkongmeren, favoured Zapuphizo to do that. Michael Scott was among the supporters of this view. But nobody ever suspected that members of the Naga Underground army would try to undermine the importance of their leaders' first visit to Delhi, by exploding bombs. Those responsible for these explosions were persons who wanted to show that the main leader of Nagas was Zapuphizo and not those who had gone for a dialogue to Delhi.

For about a year now Ao fighters of the Naga army, on the advice of some Angamis, had been attacking trains in Assam, outside the ceasefire area. On July 23, 1965, they had derailed the Assam Mail near Selenghat station. On November 25, 1965, they had fired at the 27-Up passenger train near Dhansiri station. On the 9th and 10th of February they had shot down the signalling equipment near Dhansiri station and destroyed the wheels of two coaches of a goods train by placing grenades on the tracks.

In a debate earlier, Indian troops held that since international boundaries were outside the ceasefire area, they had full freedom to search and stop Nagas from moving around there. Some Underground Nagas then decided that they too should have similar freedom outside the ceasefire area, and they started placing bombs in trains passing outside the ceasefire area near Naga territory.

Isak and I returned to Assam House with sorrowful faces. When the rest read the news they were speechless. They had never imagined that their own people would act in such a manner on the eve of the first talks with the Indian Prime Minister.

It was with great difficulty that we had brought the Naga delegation to Delhi. A year before, Shastriji had said that he would himself want to talk with Nagas. The Nagas had then said that such talks should be held in a third country. This was of course not acceptable to Delhi. The Nagas then said that the talks be held at Calcutta International Airport. They may have decided that after consultations with Rev. Michael Scott. But it was bizarre. I said to Isak and other leaders that Calcutta International Airport would not be able to provide them security. If the Indian government wanted to arrest them, it could do that at Calcutta Airport as well. The airport was not under any international authority. It was called international only because international flights landed and took off from there. Holding talks in Delhi was as good as Calcutta. A good opportunity had come their way, I said to them. India had chosen a new Prime Minister. Go and meet her as a gesture of goodwill, I said.

In Delhi the Naga delegation decided to go to Gandhiji's Samadhi at Rajghat to offer flowers. Gandhiji was one Indian for whom they had great respect. He had told them in Delhi in 1947 that if they wanted an independent state why were they hesitating to proclaim it? He had said, "On my part, I say all of India is yours and Naga country is also mine similarly. If the Indian army comes to fight you, I shall come there and receive on my chest their first bullet! I believe India is also your country. But if you do not agree, no force can be used to make you accept that."

On their way to Delhi, newspapermen met the Naga delegation as it was enplaning in Calcutta. They asked: "What will you tell the Prime Minister?"

On behalf of Kughato, Isak said, we are going to express our good wishes to the new Prime Minister and hear her. India is part of our innermost being. We shall hear from her what kind of relationship there should be between us.

On February 18, the Naga delegation arrived at the Prime Minister's conference room in South Block to meet and talk with her. All three members of the Peace Mission were there. The Prime Minister came, wearing a blue silk sari and a sweet smile, and cast her charm on all there. With the Prime Minister were the Minister of State for External Affairs, Dinesh Singh, the Joint Secretary to the P.M., Susheetal Banerjee (P.N. Haksar had not yet come to Delhi as her Secretary), and the Secretary of the External Affairs Ministry, Trilokinath Kaul. Among the Nagas, the aging Imkongmeren wore a tiger-striped red and black Ao shawl. Other Naga leaders wore red, hand-woven ties with a spear in the middle, and suits. Jaya Prakashjee wore trousers and a close-necked silk jacket, and Michael Scott wore a dark suit.

Indira was well versed in offering gracious welcome. On behalf of her father, Jawaharlal Nehru, she had hosted rulers and prime ministers of many countries. The Naga delegation was unacquainted with formalities. Before commencing the talks she asked in English: I hope your journey was comfortable.

The leader of the Naga delegation, Kughato, said something in his Sema language, and Isak interpreted it as "Yes", in English.

Waiters in bright white uniforms and starched turbans placed water, tea, biscuits and sandwiches on a shining table. To make the atmosphere easy, Indira leaning across the long, flower-laden polished table asked: "I hope you are comfortable

in Assam House?" In answer Kughato said something and Issac translated it as just "yes".

At night when I went to the prime minister's residence, she said, "Your friends are strange! When I ask them if they are comfortable, they just say 'yes'. Never 'yes, thank you!"

I related this to Kughato and other Nagas. They said, "Look! until a year ago the Indian government was trying its best to hunt us not only with guns but from the air as well!" And now it suddenly feels concerned about our comfort! Offers us tea, coffee and sandwiches. They know that we have not come here to eat sandwiches and say, yes please, thank you? We have come here for talks on a serious issue and find a solution. If we succeed, certainly we will express our heartiest thanks in our own way."

Chaliha introduced the Naga delegates to Mrs. Gandhi and presented the background of the talks. Thanking Shastri and Indira for their peace efforts, he said both sides had lost faith in one another, which had to be restored. Clashes were taking place and these had to be stopped for strengthening peace.

Opening the talks, Indira spoke from the heart and spoke beautifully. She said, "The Nagas are a brave people, I hold them in respect. Peace is essential for progress." Citing the example of India's war with Pakistan a year ago (1965), she said, "In spite of the views of some who said India and Pakistan would never come close, I have taken steps to have peace with Pakistan."

The Prime Minister said she welcomed the visit of the Nagas to Delhi. She expressed her gratitude to the efforts of the Peace Mission. She had great sympathy and feeling for Nagas, she said. Both Prime Ministers preceding her had favoured peace and wanted a peaceful solution of the Naga problem.

Indira said the Nagas were a vigorous people. They had to apply that vigour to enhance the interests of their people. In this task, the government was ready to give them all help.

The leader of the Naga delegation, Kughato, thanked Mrs. Gandhi for inviting them to Delhi. India and the rest of the world could say that the Nagas were a backward people. But that did not give anyone the right to wipe them off the face of the earth. Nagas were well acquainted with horrors of war. To end them they were appealing to the Indian government to root out its causes. They did not want to go to tragic tales of the past, he said, because they were confident of having a peaceful, conflict-free future. They had come to Delhi on wings of hope.

Chaliha said that there were two important issues to be considered. How were armed clashes to be stopped and the forces of peace strengthened? He proposed that the next day both sides consider this question in detail.

Michael Scott welcomed the initiative of the Prime Minister in calling the talks and raising their level. He thanked Mrs. Gandhi for talking to Nagas personally. (This was possibly a sign of India giving recognition to the Underground Naga movement.) He proposed that the Peace Mission should not participate in the proceedings the next day. The two parties concerned should talk directly with each other without a third party presence.

Kughato said India should arrive at an agreement. To stop the conflict a major and comprehensive step needed to be taken. The Prime Minister said clashes obstructed peace efforts. Chaliha said the talks should continue on a political level. Kughato agreed. He expressed the hope that the talks will

end forever the sufferings involved in fighting. Leaving behind their grievances, Nagas had flown to Delhi on wings of hope. Isak Su said the work of the Peace Mission was vital and its role essential. It was decided that the two parties would meet the next day at half past three in the afternoon.

The next day Kughato insisted that the talks should continue at prime ministers' level. Incidents that violated rules and regulations of the ceasefire should be investigated. He said the Naga problem should not be solved with clever tactics but with sincerity.

Chaliha said that the Prime Minister should think of releasing Naga detainees in prison. The Prime Minister said she would definitely make a move in that direction. She mentioned her current preoccupation with various domestic and international problems and said she may not be able to give enough time to the Naga problem by personally dealing with all its aspects herself. To keep the talks going she would appoint some persons to help her. They would have more time and would be able go into details. For the talks to move forward it would be worthwhile for the Nagas to talk with those she would appoint.

Kughato said the talks would make progress if kept at a political level.

Then Imkongmeren brought up Scott's suggestion that the Peace Mission should be enlarged, with the inclusion of notable, eminent personalities in it. Chaliha opposed the idea, saying the Peace Mission members were selected by the Naga Church, which alone could decide the matter of its expansion. (Scott wanted to bring in some more foreigners to increase the number of Peace Mission members.)

Kughato said the Naga delegation would present its ideas and hopes at the next session.

Talks next could be held in the second week of April, it was suggested.

Coming back from Delhi on February 21, 1966, Kughato said in Dimapur that the Naga delegation was not in favour of the Peace Mission's proposal, which had said that the Nagas had the right to decide their own future, but they should exercise that right in favour of remaining in India.

The official Indian delegation to the talks of Mr. Gundevia and the Rajyapal (Governor) had interpreted the proposal in a distorted form. They held that the Peace Mission gave no other option to the Nagas but to remain a part of India.

During the first meeting, the Indian delegation noticed that the Naga delegation had one member more than the Indian. Straightaway efforts were made to add one more person.

In the evening I went to the prime minister and narrating this story, asked, if she was concerned over the Nagas having one more person in their delegation? "You address meetings of thousands. Why do you feel the need to have the same number of persons with you as the Naga delegation? Why don't you talk with their leader alone? If possible talk with Kughato Sukhai by yourself!" I suggested.

She laughed. "Would he be willing to talk to me by himself? At the talks he doesn't speak in English and Isak Swu interprets for him."

I said: "If you would like to talk to him by yourself, I can arrange that. He doesn't speak much English, but his Hindi is all right!"

It was decided that if he agreed Mrs. Gandhi will meet him alone. At the next round of talks in April, the two met by

themselves and seemed quite happy with the outcome. But by then the Angami underground politics had started opposing Sema leaders. Because of Kughato's meeting Mrs. Gandhi alone, rumours started that he might have struck a deal with her, which might not be in the interest of Nagas.

When the Nagas got back home from Delhi, journalists asked them what would they do if the Indian government did not agree with their stand on independence?

Isak said, "We will then seek an unknown destiny!"

Things were getting a little difficult in Nagaland. Some villages refused to pay government house tax. The yearly tax levied by the British was either two rupees or four tins of rice per house, which the Indian Government continued.

For a long time the people had been demanding unification of all Naga areas. It was on the basis of this demand that on August 1, 1960, the Indian government had decided to join the Naga Hills District with the centrally-administered Division of Tuensang, and created the Naga Hills-Tuensang Area (NHTA). But many Naga areas were still left outside. The biggest of these was the Naga region of Manipur. The area of Nagaland state was 16,257 square miles, while that of the Naga region of Manipur was 12,170 square miles. Having an area of Naga inhabited territory almost equal to their state in another state hurt the feelings of the Nagas. It still hurts. The people of Manipur Naga territory are more educated and more politically conscious. The General Secretary of the Underground Naga National Socialist Council is a Tangkhul Naga of Manipur, Thingualeng Muiva.

As soon as the ceasefire came into being in Nagaland, Nagas began demanding that it should be extended to Naga areas

of Manipur also, for the people there were no less involved in the Naga struggle. But the government did not want to displease the Meitei majority population of the Imphal valley by dividing Manipur into two: Naga and non-Naga. Therefore ceasefire was not extended to Manipur. The Nagas of Manipur took advantage of this. They stopped paying taxes. When the para-military Manipur Rifles and the Government set-up Village Defence Force came to forcibly collect taxes, some Nagas ambushed and attacked them. In this the Sub-Divisional Officer of Tamenglong district, Mr. Kundanpur, was killed.

The Underground Nagas celebrated their independence day, August 14 (one day before the Indian independence day), with abandon in Makufe, a village in Manipur. Their President, Scato Su, came there, where more than 5,000 Nagas had gathered. The 75th battalion of the Naga army ceremoniously saluted him. He then unfurled the Naga national flag and listened to the Naga National Anthem "The dawn is breaking", watched a sports competition and awarded prizes.

Among the guests present were the former Chief Minister of Orissa and a Gandhian leader, Nabakrushna Chaudhury, and Miss Marjorie Sykes, a British follower of Gandhiji. They had been brought by Mr. Jaya Prakash Narayan for peace work in Nagaland.

Difference arose among the Nagas over asking Zapuphizo to come to India for talks with the Government. To discuss this matter with him, first his brother, Keviyallei, was sent to England, and later, in May-June, 1967, the Tangkhul Naga leader, R. Suisa, and Vizol (who, some years later became the Chief Minister of Nagaland twice, and once a member of the Indian parliament). Delhi was against their going to England.

The Prime Minister's Office (under Mr. Haksar) suspected that Zapuphizo in London would invite journalists and have the two Nagas make anti-Indian statements. I assured him, that would not happen. Mr. Haksar asked me, "Can you guarantee that?" "Yes, of course", I said. I went with the two to London.

In London talks, neither did Zapuphizo say that he wanted to come to India to take part in the talks, nor did the Naga delegation declare that it wanted to bring Zapuphizo home for that. Zapuphizo sent a message to Naga leaders that he was still engaged in the work of seeking the support of other countries for independence of Nagaland. When he had left Kohima in 1956, he had said he would work to obtain support abroad for the Naga cause.

The second round of talks with the Prime Minister was fixed for April 9 to 12.

The Naga Underground Federal Government in the meanwhile said foreign journalists should be allowed to visit Nagaland, which was not done so far. (Both foreign and Indian journalists required entry passes from the government to visit Nagaland.) Michael Scott of the Peace Mission supported this demand.

Before the Naga delegation's departure for Delhi, processions were taken out and demonstrations held in various parts of Nagaland. One slogan was raised by demonstrators everywhere: "Withdraw the Indian army!"

The army had become a symbol of oppression.

Two new demands were being made by Underground Nagas: A neutral country or power be invited to help in bringing about an agreement on Nagaland, and the number of the Peace Mission members be increased. In Delhi talks Kughato Sukhai

said officials were placing obstacles in the way of the talks by misleading and misinforming the Prime Minister about Naga activity. The Prime Minister asked if all members of the Peace Mission agreed with the propaganda being made abroad of alleged atrocities in Nagaland, or was it being carried out at the instigation of just one member? That kind of propaganda would only increase tension and incidents of violence would not decrease.

Chaliha then intervened and said that the talks were dragging on, creating a feeling of despair and incidents between the Indian army and armed Nagas were increasing.

On his way home from Delhi, Kughato said in Calcutta that no agreement under the Indian Constitution was possible.

On May 1, 1966, the Indian government issued orders for the deportation of Michael Scott, and on May 3 Chaliha too resigned from the Peace Mission, ending its three year existence. Jaya Prakash Narayan had already submitted his resignation from the Mission on February 17.

Possibilities of a peaceful solution of the problem had been created by the Peace Mission. Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru died saying, if the Nagas so much as mentioned independence, no talks would be held with them. The Peace Mission had made it possible to hold talks without pre-conditions. India had also been saying that the talks had to be held under the provisions of the Indian Constitution. This condition too was set aside. It was due to the efforts of the Mission that the talks had started and advanced.

On May 13, 1966, elections to the Nagaland Assembly were held. The Naga Underground did not want election while India and Nagas were talking and wanted them postponed until

an agreement was reached. But the underground did not resort to firing to stop the elections. According to government figures, about 50 per cent of the people voted in those elections. On Chanki village in the Ao area, the Underground government levied a fine of rupees seven thousand for taking part in the election, and rupees four hundred on Lungkhum village.

The third round of talks with the Prime Minister took place on August 10 and 11.

In it, Mrs. Gandhi said: Both parties should trust each other. Mediation by a third party would not bring a lasting solution. Some provisions could be made in the Indian constitution to accommodate Naga aspirations. She did not talk of an agreement under the current provisions of the Indian Constitution. It was possible for the Nagas to live their lives on the basis of their traditional system, she said.

Kughato Sukhai said: The Nagas desire to stay close to India. They need help from India.

Mrs. Gandhi: You should come to the next meeting with proposals for unity with India. It was agreed that third party mediation was not necessary and the talks be kept confidential and details not divulged.

In the course of this round the Nagas presented a thirteen-point memorandum to the Prime Minister, which was a resume of their struggle from the time of British attacks on their land, and a reiteration of the Nagas' desire to forge close links with India.

On this occasion I had brought with me to Delhi two Naga leaders, Rungsung Suisa (Uncle Suisa) who had earlier been elected to Indian Parliament from North Manipur constituency, and Vizol who later became the Chief Minister

of Nagaland state twice. In Delhi Uncle Suisa wrote a letter to Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and to the Naga leader, Kugato Sukhai, with proposals on the basis of which a settlement could be reached.

As he had not seen any progress in the talks, the old and experienced Uncle Suisu asked Mrs. Gandhi in his letter what kind of relations did she want between the Nagas and India: friendship, union, or federation?

He said the Nagas should give a firm undertaking not to do anything against Indian interests. Indian currency should remain legal tender in Nagaland. India must assist Nagaland until it became self-supporting. No taxes be levied on goods coming into Nagaland. Roads and communications be developed by India until Nagaland had the capacity to manage them on its own. All Naga areas should be joined with Nagaland to put them under one administration. Naga sovereignty should be recognized in their internal matters. Defence and external affairs should be joint subjects. Delhi should be the capital of the federation.

The letter said:

On political level the Naga State shall promise not to do anything against the interests of India or cause harm to them. (This needed to be elaborated in the talks.)

Economic level: Indian currency would be legal tender in Nagaland until the latter becomes capable of creating its own currency.

India will give economic assistance to Nagaland to the tune of ten crores of rupees (10,00,00,000) a year, to be spent on the needs of the state. This assistance would continue until Nagaland became economically self-reliant.

On goods entering Nagaland, India should not levy taxes.

Administration: India would undertake maintenance of roads until Nagaland had the capacity to do that on its own. Post and Telegraph should also be the responsibility of India on the same basis.

The boundaries of Nagaland should be adjusted. All Naga tribes should be included in the state. The state should have a special status.

It should have sovereignty in its internal affairs.

All Naga political prisoners in Indian jails should be released.

Along with these proposals Uncle Suisa attached a letter to both the prime ministers. He said India-Naga talks affected most people of the region. "Even though I am not qualified, I am placing my thoughts before you. The talks are not making progress because they lack openness. Talks are conducted with so much caution as if these were between enemies. Both parties were cautious not to say anything which could be exploited by the other. Neither party thought of "give and take" and open the road to progress. In these fast changing times the parties need to solve their problems quickly. Through foresight a kind of relationship should be established which would benefit both. I therefore pray for improvement in relations which will bring the two closer.

"My proposals are a rough outline which I am humbly placing before both of you. I request both to consider them with wisdom and foresight, remove differences and bring about unity. I request both not to see this as an interference."

By writing this letter Uncle Suisa tried to clarify some misunderstandings. Naga independence or sovereignty were not mentioned. He suggested, rather than demanded, that the

above-mentioned approach should be made the basis of the talks and that these should proceed in goodwill and friendship.

Suisa proposals included what in the Indian Constitution is called concurrent subjects under the control of the Centre in Delhi and also state Governments.

Currency in Nagaland was to remain Indian. Roads and post and telegraph should be with India. For running Nagaland administration, India would give rupees ten crores a year (or whatever amount was agreed upon). The boundaries of Nagaland be adjusted. Naga people should have full freedom to run their society.

In the letter Uncle Suisa said in the matter of defence both parties should be partners. Naga country was situated on international border. Its people had to be in the frontline of defence against outside attack and infiltration. He mentioned India's border war with China in 1962. The people of NEFA (Arunachal Pradesh now) watched thousands of Chinese soldiers enter their territory but they neither opposed them nor did they inform India of the infiltration. They stayed uninvolved. If the Naga people were not engaged in offering frontline defence against aggression, the preparedness of the whole subcontinent would be weak. Therefore both sides would have to work together in defence. To give the Indian army the sole responsibility for defence and security would not be wise. The Naga people would have to be involved in that task.

Prime Minister Indira Gandhi seemed to understand his proposals. She grasped their meaning and seemed to welcome them.

On August 10, 1966, I had taken Uncle Suisa with his proposals to meet her. That very day the Prime Minister

was to hold talks with the Underground delegation. These talks of August 10 and 11 were the third round of her talks. I give below some snippets of the talks:

The talks began with prayers which the Nagas being Christian always offered to begin with. A Naga Governor, Jassie Hurie, offered a prayer for the well being of the Prime Minister.

Prime Minister: After our last round of talks, some new things have come up. I hope you have read Mr. Suisa's proposals and studied them. Looking at them, I feel he is in favour of uniting the two (Nagas and the Indians) in a federation or a union.

Naga Underground Prime Minister, Kughato Sukhai: Yes, madam. We have seen the proposals.

Another Naga leader: The Government of India has not put forward any points for discussion. We were hoping that you would present some points, on the basis of which the talks could proceed.

Naga representative, Ramyo: The Prime Minister was saying something on Suisa proposals, which she did not complete.

Prime Minister: He gave these papers (the proposals were still on her table) just a while ago, before you came. Mr. Chandola had brought him to me. He left a few minutes ago. I have not been able to read the proposals fully. The proposals say that between Nagas and India there should be either a friendly agreement, a federation or union. Of these what seems possible is the idea of a union. No details or its finer points are given in the proposals, but we can discuss them. If you wish, you can discuss with our representatives the possibility of expanding the area of these proposals. Talks on these may not be possible with

me. To elaborate them, a discussion is necessary. This will take time. Such a discussion should be held separately. If you think it proper, you can hold discussions with our representatives.

Ramyo: This picture of a union or federation that the prime minister may have in her mind has to be elaborated., Without a broader idea of this federation, how can one discuss the proposal.

Prime Minister: Yes. Some subjects will remain with the Centre, like defence, external relations, currency. But these are matters on which representatives of both sides will take a joint decision. There are other subjects on which we have to have talks. Subjects which should be with the Centre or with Nagaland have to be discussed.

Ramyo: A federation is formed between two equals. If India accepts the idea of equality and sovereignty of the Nagas, the talks will definitely be fruitful.

Prime Minister: Sovereignty has many meanings. You should understand that our states (which have formed the Indian Union) are not subordinate to one another. There are subjects on which the states enjoy full sovereignty. The question does not arise of any state being subordinate to another in any way. The states have a fully equal status among themselves. In some matters they are not even under the Centre. They have the full right to decide on many subjects.

Ramyo: The Nagas have never been a part of India. We have not talked about a union even among ourselves. India is a big country. For India it will be easy to explain to us fully the concept of a union. We have not ever thought of this concept.

Prime Minister: This is precisely what we have to do. We want to know what ideas you have on this. We want to know your thinking.

Naga Underground Prime Minister, Kughato Sukhai: The Nagas cannot leave India, nor can India leave the Nagas! India has been saying all along that there should be a "give and take" on both sides. But we are seeing that India is not willing to give anything!

T.N. Kaul: (Foreign Secretary): And the Nagas only want to take!

After these talks the Prime Minister appointed a group of her Ministers and officials to discuss at length the proposals of Uncle Suisa. Its members were the Minister of Commerce, Mr. Dinesh Singh, (who was the External Affairs minister at the time of the first round of talks and was present at that round), the Deputy Minister of External Affairs, Mr. Surendra Pal Singh, the Cabinet Secretary and some others. The talks with this group went off well the next day. But since the talks were not focussed on the question of division of subjects (which subjects were to be with the Centre in Delhi and which with Nagas), not much progress was made.

The fourth round of talks was held in Delhi from October 27 to 29, 1966. At these talks the Prime Minister asked the Naga delegates about their idea of sovereignty. Could provisions be made in the Indian Constitution to provide sovereignty and independence to Nagas on some subjects?

Kughato Sukhai: You tell us yourself what kind of arrangements you want that would safeguard Nagas' sovereignty?

The Prime Minister said they should talk on this matter with her colleagues, the following day. The Nagas then had talks with the Minister of Commerce, Mr. Dinesh Singh, the Deputy Minister of External Affairs, Mr. Surendra Pal Singh,

and some others. It was stated at this meeting that the Nagas would not be self-reliant or self-dependent in economy and defence.

While these talks were going on, the Chief Minister of Nagaland, Mr. T.N. Angami, wrote a letter to the Prime Minister from Kohima asking if it was true that she had by-passed the Constitution and was prepared to make separate arrangements with the Underground Nagas for their remaining in India? The Nagaland state's fear was that if an agreement was reached by Delhi with the Underground, there would be no need for the present state government in Kohima. The Prime Minister's Office replied that some changes in the Constitution could be made if those helped in coming to an agreement, but no major changes were possible. Whatever proposals were made for amending of the Constitution would have to be placed before Parliament, for no other body except Parliament was authorized to make changes in the Constitution.

The fifth round of talks took place in Delhi from January 2 to 5, 1967. In it the Nagas asked the Prime Minister what form she had in her mind of a new relationship with them. She should clarify that, they said. Only then would they be able to give their reaction.

I used to talk freely about many things with my friends in the Underground. I said if they remained entangled in definitions of independence and sovereignty, the talks might make no progress. Take note of the system of governance in India, I told them. There are three categories of subjects: first those exclusively with the Central or Union Government, such as defence, currency, external relations and communications. Some others were jointly managed by both the Centre and the states, such as education, trade, commerce, forests.

And then came still others, which were solely under the states, such as land revenue, some other taxes and law and order. Think about these categories and decide which you wish to keep and which to give to Delhi, I asked them.

After the fifth round of talks in January, I told Indian officials that they were not paying attention to what the Naga delegates were saying. Forget the wrangle over the definition of sovereignty and come to the question of subjects of governance given to states. The Naga delegation had spoken on this point at the last meeting, I said.

No, they had not, the officials who assisted the Prime Minister in talks said in one voice.

"Look at the letter to the Prime Minister from Mr. Suisa", I said.

"Suisa is not a part of the Naga delegation", they said.

"Look at the proceedings of the last talks!" I said.

The proceedings of the talks had been taken down by Mr. Triloki Nath Kaul, the Foreign Secretary. He went to his room and came with a long roll of paper that looked like a horoscope, in which he had recorded all that was discussed.

A careful reading of it showed that the Naga delegation had indeed talked of links and relations between India and Nagas, including the division of subjects between a Naga state and the Centre. The Indian delegation had missed it. But Mr. Kaul had certainly noted it down. Kughato Sukhai had said clearly that the Nagas wanted best relations with India and that was why they were coming repeatedly to Delhi for talks.

After the meetings with the Prime Minister on January 2 and 5, 1967, talks were held with Indian Ministers and officials at another level. Present in them were the Commerce Minister

Mr. Dinesh Singh, the Home Secretary, Mr. Ladli Prasad Singh, the Secretary for External Affairs, Mr. Trilokinath Kaul, and the Prime Minister's Joint Secretary, Mr. Sushital Banerjee. On the Naga side were Mr. Jassie Hurrie, Mr. Ramyo and Mr. Megameto Angam. The Naga delegation asked at this meeting what would be the main links between India and Nagas, and what would be the joint subjects of governance? The Naga delegation had no problem in establishing links, it was said.

The Indian officials said on some subjects Naga sovereignty would be maintained without dispute. Only defence, external relations, currency and communications would remain central subjects. The Nagas wanted to know the nature of links between the Centre and the Nagas. These links were to be forged with the joint efforts of both parties. Some of the links were defined in the Indian Constitution, in the list of Concurrent and State subjects. Those links had to be formed and their nature to be explained in detail.

On the second day the talks with the Prime Minister moved away from the debate on subjects.

The Prime Minister said members of the Underground were breaking the rules of ceasefire. This was disputed by the Nagas, who said officials were misinforming the Prime Minister on the matter.

They said they wanted to send some representatives to London for consultation with Zapuphizo.

After some deliberation, the Government agreed to the demand.

But when the talks were held again on January 5 with the Prime Minister, the same worn out question—perhaps on the prompting of officials—of the Nagas breaking the conditions

of the ceasefire agreement was raised. Practical measures for forging links between the two was pushed to the background. It has been an old habit of our leaders to keep matters hanging, in the hope that the passage of time will solve them.

The Nagas sent Mr. Suisa and Mr. Vizol to talk with Zapuphizo to London. I went with them.

While holding talks, breaking Naga unity was high on the government's agenda. The Indian army was looking for signs of weaknesses in Naga ranks. At political level efforts to create disunity in the Underground continued.

The Nagas are divided in many tribes. Their internal quarrels are old and go far back. Only their political struggle for independence had brought them together. Enmity among tribes could be rekindled. The government was successful to some extent in this task. The very able commander of the Naga guerrillas, Kaito, was shot at and killed on August 3, 1968, in Kohima bazaar by a member of the Naga army, Captain Arno. (Later Arno himself fell prey to a bullet in his own Khonoma village.)

By reviving old Naga feuds the government hoped to obtain some relief. But its difficulties increased in the long run. Internal feuds broke Naga unity. But one section of Nagas who later formed the National Socialist Council of Nagalim (NSCN), strengthened itself by acquiring more weapons and international support. India felt concerned. Thirty years of effort of Zapuphizo had not been able to win international recognition for Naga struggle. The NSCN won the membership of the Unrepresented Nations' and Peoples' Organisation (UNPO) of the United Nations. Asking for the release of Muiva, the General Secretary of the National Socialist Council

of Nagalim, from a Bangkok jail, the Dutch Government wrote to the Thai government that Muiva was the leader of an unrepresented nation, and it was not right to imprison him for not having a proper passport. Naga leaders were invited to international conferences on human rights. The Dutch note to Thailand said Nagalim was a member of a UN-supported international body.

One of the causes for weakening of the Naga unity was Zapuphizo. He wanted to lead the Naga delegation to Delhi talks. But he wished to do this only when his colleagues involved in Delhi talks had failed. He was waiting for that to happen.

In 1997 the Government of India began talks with the new organization National Socialist Council of Nagalim (NSCN), at the prime ministerial level for a new ceasefire and settlement. These talks first took place outside India, in foreign countries, for some years. Five Indian prime ministers after Narasimha Rao participated in them.

Back to 1960s. The last Naga talks with Prime Minister Indira Gandhi took place in Delhi on October 5, 1967. When the Nagas wanted to continue the talks they were told that the Prime Minister was going abroad and would not have the time.

The Naga delegation used to be accommodated in the Government's Hyderabad Guest House, in New Delhi for the talks. Kughato Sukhai, the leader of the Naga delegation fell ill, when he arrived in Delhi in October. After spending a day in Wellingdon Hospital, he obtained a room in Janpath Hotel. The rest of the Naga delegation remained in the zenana (women's quarters) of the Hyderabad House, where it was always lodged.

Because of Kughato's illness the talks with the Prime Minister had to be postponed by a day. The next day, the talks began in the conference room of the Prime Minister in the evening. After the Naga delegates were seated, along with the Indian delegates, the Prime Minister came and looking at Kughato, said, "I am sorry to learn that you have been unwell! I hope the hospital took good care of you. I went to the hospital this morning to see you, but was told that you had left."

Kughato Sukhai: I was there for a day. I hope to be all right soon. We were to meet yesterday, but my illness caused a day's delay. I am sorry for that.

Prime Minister: Would you like to offer a prayer before we start?

Kughato prays. Waiters bring trays of tea, sandwiches, etc.

Prime Minister: After our last discussion, two persons from Nagaland went to London to meet Mr. Zapuphizo. Would you like to say something about the outcome of this meeting?

Kughato: I shall myself speak today. (So far, Isak Chishi Swu used to be the official interpreter of the Naga delegation, putting in English what its members said. He had not come to Delhi this time.

"My English is not good," Mr. Kughato said "I hope I will be able to express myself."

Prime Minister: Your English is perfectly all right. I understand whatever you say. What was Mr. Zapuphizo's reaction to Delhi negotiations and peace efforts in his talks with Naga leaders who had gone to London to meet him?

Kughato: Mr. Zapuphizo too wants a peaceful settlement, like we all. Meetings and exchanges between Nagas are necessary. This is our sixth meeting in Delhi. Inspite my illness

I have come here to seek an agreement between us. I wish to read something now. He takes out an envelope from his pocket, reads a paper from it and gives it to Mrs. Gandhi.

The paper is about the need for a peaceful settlement. He reads it and says: "I want to know your reaction to whatever is said in this paper. My colleagues and I have come here with much hope."

Prime Minister: I see that Naga groups are going to China. This is not in the interests of India…

Kughato: Sovereignty cannot have many meanings, one for us and another for you. We are not students to be taught the meanings of words. The Nagas have a state and the state is sovereign.

Prime Minister: This is just what we have to talk about. How do states work together? What kind of links and relations do they form? Through our talks we have to clarify these issues. What are the relations between a state and a union?

In talks we had so far, you emphatically stated that both sides after due deliberation should put forward proposals on which an agreement can be possible. You talked about forging political and economic links and mutual cooperation.

On this you had some positive discussions with other members of our team (Dinesh Singh, etc).

Ramyo (a Member of the Underground Naga Assembly and later Home Minister): We want to know from you the outline and contours of relations between us, as you envisage. On knowing this we will tell you our reactions and also put forward our ideas.

Prime Minister: I have been told that our members have conveyed the outline of these relations and our thinking to you.

Ramyo: Some things were said at those informal talks. But we are keen to know your own perception on the establishment of relations.

Prime Minister: You sent some of your men to London to talk with Mr Zapuphizo. I hope you have come here after examining what our colleagues told you at the last meeting and all that has been said in our talks so far.

Tomorrow I will not have the time for talks as I am leaving on a visit to some countries. At this meeting I will not have the time for a detailed discussion. If you wish, you can continue these talks with other members of the government with whom you have already talked.

Ramyo: We came with the hope that we will be able to create an atmosphere of understanding between us. We are discouraged that there will be no time for that.

Prime Minister: In Manipur the situation is not good, not in the interests of India. Relations are being forged with China and weapons brought from there by you.

Ramyo: Madame Prime Minister, you had talked about a union or a federation. Can you throw some light on its outline? If this is not clear what kind of discussions can we have on details?

Prime Minister: There is need for discussion on the subject. Its details cannot be discussed at this level (at the Prime Ministerial level). Separate talks will have to be held on it. You can talk about that with members of my government. Talks between us will be possible after that…

Kughato: If you accept that Nagas are a nation and have the right to national sovereignty, then everything will be easier and we can discuss relations.

"Forgive me. I am unable to have further talks at the moment because of my ill health," he said.

Prime Minister: You should take care of your health.

Kughato: Let us meet another day. Perhaps tomorrow.

That was not possible because of Mrs. Gandhi's journey preparations to go abroad.

The sad part of it was that a Deputy Secretary of the External Affairs Ministry, Musaddi Lal Kampani, came to Hyderabad Guest House in the evening to tell the Naga delegates that they would have to vacate it, because it was reserved for some other guests the following day.

The Nagas inferred from this that the Prime Minister did not want to continue the talk with them at this time and was asking them to leave Delhi. They said, "Why tomorrow, we will vacate it right away." The leader of their delegation, Kaghato Sukhai, who was unwell was already in Janpath Hotel.

Journalists turned up later to ask the Naga delegates about the talks with the Prime Minister. A Naga leader, Mr. Ramyo, said the Indian government had not said anything new at that day's meeting. It however had asked them to vacate Hyderabad House.

As soon as news agency reports on this were circulated, Mr. Dinesh Singh telephoned the Naga delegation to say that the official who asked Hyderabad House to be vacated had made a mistake. Mr. Ramyo said that the officer had already reserved their seats on the early morning flights to Calcutta for their return, the following day. "To say that there was no room for us and we should go home was an insult" Ramyo said.

Then at 8 p.m. Mr. T.N. Kaul, the Foreign Secretary, came to Hyderabad House to apologize for the behaviour of his

officer and asked the Naga delegation to stay at least another day. Their airline seats would be changed for a later day, he said. Mr. Kaul was taken to Janpath Hotel where Mr. Kughato was staying.

Mr. Kughato Sukhai declined to accept Mr. Kaul's proposition and insisted on leaving the next day, for which seats had been reserved by the Government.

Mr. Kaul said, "I shall sit here all night to stop you from leaving!" The Nagas then ordered coffee and sandwiches for Mr. Kaul, for he said his wife was waiting for him for dinner.

The whole night the ailing Mr. Kughato lay on his bed while Mr. Kaul and we sat on chairs. At four in the morning taxis came from Hyderabad House with luggage and other delegates. Mr. Kughato was helped to the lift. All came down and the Nagas got into the taxis to go to the airport, waving goodbye to Mr. Kaul as they drove off.

This was the last Naga talk with the Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi.

Perhaps we don't have self-respect. That is why we fail to show it for others. The Indian government had many guest houses in Delhi and other accommodation. Why did it have to say to five invited Nagas to vacate the guest house and go home? They had been invited to Delhi.

There is yet another story about the way our government behaves, which I want to relate.

In April the previous year, when the Naga delegation had come for the second round of talks to Delhi it was put up in Hyderabad House. For the first round it had stayed in Assam House. Hyderabad House was divided in two parts, the good and the bad. The bad one was the 'harem' or women's quarters

of former Hyderabad rulers. Outside its rooms were high walls for the privacy of women. The rooms had no air conditioning or ceiling fans. Its good part had them all. The Naga delegation was accommodated in the women's quarter. Portable fans were brought in. Three Nagas were put to a room. Water was in short supply, insufficient to flush toilets. After use, toilets lids had to be closed to stop the smell from getting into rooms. In the growing heat of April and May the rooms were stifling.

When the Nawab's women lived there, the rooms perhaps had sweet-smelling khas screens with water sprinkled on them regularly. Frilled cloth fans as wide as the room, drawn with strings would have been pulled by servants to move room air and keep it cool. Perhaps rose or jasmine grew in courtyards to keep the atmosphere fragrant.

Now there was nothing, except fierce heat.

The Secretary of External Affairs, Mr. Kaul, who took part in the Naga talks, was a friend of mine. I told him about the heat in rooms where the Naga delegation was lodged. He said its good part was reserved for some other visitors who were to come later. With Mr. Kaul was his favourite Joint Secretary, Mr. Ashok Bhadkamkar. Listening to my complaint, he thought I was exaggerating! "These apes have just got down from trees and want air conditioning!" he said, surprised, perhaps not knowing that the guests came from Naga Hills which were always cool.

I said, they have not complained! It was me who was describing the situation!

In the morning, before the day's talks with the Prime Minister were to begin, I went to Mrs. Gandhi's residence. She wanted to know the issues the Nagas may bring up at the

talks. She said, "I am very busy today. Presidents of Egypt and Yugoslavia, Nasser and Tito, are returning to their countries. I have to go to Rashtrapati Bhavan and then to the airport to bid them good bye. You come along with me in the car and we can talk on the way."

In her car two men were sitting in front with the driver and Mrs. Gandhi me in the back. I told her what the Nagas might raise at the coming talks. She asked if they were all right in Hyderabad House? I told her about the conditions there. She asked, "Why didn't you say this to Mr. Kaul?" "I told him" I said, "but his colleague wanted to know how these primitive tribals had started nursing expectations of better accommodation?" I told her, "If an ordinary guest comes to your house, do you lower your standard of living? You put up the Presidents of Yugoslavia and Egypt in Rashtrapati Bhavan and reserved two whole floors of Asoka Hotel for their officials. But for people you call your own, you are not bothered about their comfort? And as far as their primitiveness is concerned, if you invite our sages and philosophers of old to your place, they may not know how to use a modern flush system. But look at their intellectual level!"

As we neared the airport, one of the men sitting in front turned around and asked Mrs. Gandhi about her cold? He was Mr. Natwar Singh, a Deputy Secretary in her office. (Who after some years became a Minister.)

In the evening I was called to Mr. Kaul's office. Annoyed, he asked why I had complained to the Prime Minister about the accommodation in Hyderabad House?

On returning from the airport, Mr. Natwar Singh had reported to Mr. Kaul my complaint to Mrs. Gandhi.

Despite that, the Naga delegation continued to be lodged in the women's section of the Hyderabad House.

In the course of the third round of talks, on one occasion, in the sweltering heat and humidity of August, the Naga delegation was sitting in a courtyard of the guest house hoping for a breeze, when a Deputy Secretary of the External Affairs Ministry, Mr. M.L. Kampani, came over to see Mr. Kughato Sukhai and delivered him an invitation for dinner from his Minister, Mr. Dinesh Singh.

Mr. Kughato turned it down. Like his father, Kohoto, who was a renowned interpreter during the British administration, Kughato did not make friends easily.

Mr. Kampani, who had come from the army to serve in Nagaland, was known to brag in Delhi that the Naga delegates were his close friends and would do whatever he would ask them to.

Mr. Dinesh Singh was hurt over his invitation being turned down. He then called me and said: "Bhai Saheb! During talks with Prime Minister, protocol and formalities come in the way of creating a friendly and relaxed atmosphere. To overcome that I thought of inviting the Naga delegates to my place for a meal, at which we would have an informal and friendly atmosphere and members of both sides would be able to talk freely and informally. We would be able to speak about our families and even exchange light-hearted banter.

Officers like Kampani had been saying that Nagas were heavy drinkers. In the fridge of Hyderabad House our External Affairs Ministry had kept bottles of good liquor. But the Nagas did not touch them. They did not even take bottles of soft drinks from the fridge.

Mr. Dinesh Singh said: Maybe they'll accept my invitation if you ask them to.

I said to the Naga delegates: "Listen, in Hyderabad House you are enjoying the hospitality of the Indian government. At Dinesh Singh's house it will be the same. Turning down a Minister's invitation is not polite!"

Kughato said: Look, we have not come here for eating. We are here to solve a problem. Why do you ask us to visit people's homes and get involved in unnecessary activity?

But they agreed to accept the invitation finally.

They went to the dinner, but were alert. Among them were people like Isak who never touched liquor. Those who could drink, also abstained. A good dinner came from the nearby Ashok Hotel. Then Coffee with Swiss chocolate were served. The guests bit into the chocolates, which were filled with liquor. A tingling sensation filled their mouths. Ramyo turned to me and asked: "What is this inside the chocolates?"

"Alcohol!" I said.

"Oh! Damn!" he and others said. And began spitting the chocolate and liquor into glass ashtrays on tables. The glittering diamond-like ashtrays of Raja Dinesh Singh were soon filled with green and yellow liquor and chewed chocolate from the guests mouths.

The next day officials connected with the talks heard that the Naga delegation had been to dinner at Dinesh Singh's house. Earlier, they knew that the invitation had been turned down.

Mr. Kaul said to me when we met, "Don't encourage Dinesh Singh! We are the ones who do the work and he gets the credit! I know it was because of you that the Naga delegation went to

his house. Today Dinesh Singh is being congratulated by the Prime Minister and others for having the Nagas over!"

This is the way high-ups in Delhi think of each other. In their pursuit of praise from the Prime Minister they do not mind pulling the rug from under the feet of colleagues.

Let me narrate a story of how the government works.

Once to have the ceasefire period extended, I had gone to Delhi. When I met Mrs. Gandhi in the morning she said she was extremely busy. There was a cabinet meeting in the evening and the next morning she was leaving for Moscow. She said that I should see Mr. Sushital Bannerjee (her Joint Secretary and office head), and have him take down whatever I wanted to tell her.

Mr. Haksar had not come to India and taken over as Secretary to the Prime Minister then.

I went to Mr. Bannerjee and told him that to procure arms Nagas were trying to go to Yunnan in China through Burma's Kachin area. Worried over repeated threats made by Mr. Gundevia to redeploy the army in villages again and an armed conflict resuming, the Nagas were thinking of obtaining more weapons. Not seeing any hope of a settlement, the Naga army was wanting more arms. Earlier, they had been bringing them from East Pakistan. I told Mr. Bannerjee that the Prime Minister wanted me to ask him to note that down.

He asked me to wait and over his secret phone he called someone to come over. Soon, Mr. K.N. Prasad, Joint Director of the Central Intelligence Bureau, who looked Security, came and was introduced to me. He was told what I had said.

"Let them go ahead and make their attempt! The Nagas will never, never, succeed in entering China through the Kachin area," he said most emphatically.

"Why?" I asked.

"Because the Kachins are sworn enemies of communists, and staunch Christians!

"Many former Kuominatang (the government before the Communist regime in China) soldiers have settled in Kachin area and are carrying on a thriving trade in opium, heroin and jade from there to places outside, through Thailand. The American CIA, with which we have some dealings, airdrops them food and weapons. Overall, the Kachin region is strongly anti-communist. It will never give passage to Nagas to go to China, and if they somehow manage to sneak through, the Kachins will confiscate all their arms on return. That is why I say that even the most clever Naga will not be able to go to China. As for bringing weapons from there, it will be impossible!" he said.

Living in far away Kohima I was a nobody and Mr. Prasad was a Joint Director of the Central Intelligence Bureau. I could not argue with him.

Led by Naga general Thinusilie, a Naga group of 147 fighters left Nagaland in 1967, walked hundreds of kilometers to China and was back home with weapons. On return, exhausted Naga fighters went to their villages to rest and then news got around that the Nagas had returned from China. Thinusilie did not lose a single soldier or a weapon on the way. The Kachin people took them to the frontier of China. The Nagas, on their return, presented some weapons to the Kachin Independence Army fighting the Burmese government.

At that time the commander of the Indian Eighth Mountain Division at Jakhama, ten kilometers from Kohima, was Major General Naveen Chandra Rawli. He came to know

that a unit of the China-returned Nagas had set up camp a few kilometers from his headquarters, on the banks of a small river, Jana, in the forest of Pulebaje, below Japvu mountain. On June 7, 1968, at dawn, he sent his soldiers to surround the Naga camp and kill or capture its men. The Nagas were eating their morning meal of rice, dal and meat, when Indian soldiers reached their camp. Seeing themselves surrounded they left their food, opened fire, created a curtain of bullets and escaped. One however left behind his Chinese automatic rifle, some hand grenades and documents and diaries.

Indian soldiers captured them.

Major General Naveen Chandra Rawli was clever. He must have sent news of material recovered to army headquarters in Delhi, giving details of the raid. Some Calcutta journalists were in Kohima at that time, and he called and showed them the captured Chinese weapons and diaries.

The following day it was the main story in all Indian newspapers: "Weapons smuggled from China captured in Army raid on Nagas!" Alongside were photographs of the rifle and hand grenades.

Pandamonium broke out in Lok Sabha (Parliament) in Delhi the next day. Members shouted accusations at Mrs. Gandhi, saying she was exposing the country to a serious danger by holding talks with the traitorous Nagas. Mr. R.K. Karanjia, the editor of '*Blitz*' magazine—brought to the Rajya Sabha with the help of the Congress Party was a staunch supporter of Mrs. Gandhi. He also criticized the Prime Minister for talking to Nagas. The Congress government at that time had a majority of just seventeen members. Morarji Desai was the Deputy Prime Minister. His supporters were unhappy with Mrs. Gandhi's government and wanted it to be ousted. The storm in

Parliament over arms from China made her government seem shaky and that worried her. (I have dealt with some aspects of it earlier.)

It was my ill luck to have come to Delhi at that time. The next morning I stood on the lawns of Mrs. Gandhi's garden with a proposal to extend the ceasefire period in Nagaland. As soon as she saw me, she called me in. With extreme anger, she said: "You must have read in newspapers about the uproar yesterday in Parliament! And it's all thanks to you that I found myself in such a situation. If only you had told me about Nagas going to China, I would have been prepared. All these people who are breathing fire have no interest whatever in solving the Naga problem. Their one aim is to drive me out of office! With your help that is becoming possible!"

I said: "As early as the end of 1967, following your instructions, I had informed your Joint Secretary, Mr. Susheetal Bannerjee, of preparations being made by Nagas to go to China. He did not believe what I said."

Her anger flared up: "Are these matters to be told to Susheetal and left at that? It's me you should have told!"

"But that evening you had a cabinet meeting and in the morning you were to depart for the Soviet Union. How was I to tell you?"

She wanted to vent her anger over attacks on her in Parliament the previous day on me and shouted: "Do you know I can have you arrested for this?"

I said: "That may bring me good fortune! Those that have been to prison found themselves in luck afterwards!"

The sarcasm angered her further. She raised her voice and shouted, "Are you aware that it is the Prime Minister of India you are talking to, and making a joke of what she is saying?"

Her voice became so high pitched and loud that persons waiting outside to see her came to the door that opened into her garden to know what was going on. Seeing this, she shouted for her servant, Nathu, and told him angrily: "How many times have I asked you to keep that door closed when I am talking to someone here?"

In the room of her private secretary, Mr. Seshan, Mr. P.N. Haksar, who had just come from Europe to take over as Secretary to the Prime Minister, was waiting. Seeing me go out he asked, "Why, what happened?"

"I don't know! She just got angry!" I said.

To insulate herself from unwelcome events in Nagaland, she made Brajkumar Nehru, the Governor of Assam and Nagaland, in charge of all north-eastern states.

The Peace Mission had, by bringing about a ceasefire put an end to ten years of bloodshed, and helped both parties to come together for negotiations and finding a peaceful solution. But officials cleverly brought to an end the Peace Mission efforts.

Clouds of uncertainty gathered on the horizon.

There were many reasons for the breakdown for the talks. Chief among them was the government's lack of foresight. The talks never were centered on the main issue of a settlement. Many side issues were taken up and left midway. No dominant line of thought or action emerged and the talks ran in all directions. From time to time, people of doubtful capabilities were brought in to deal with the situation, but none with real understanding made in charge. First the Foreign Secretary, Mr. Gundevia, then Mr. Trilokinath Kaul, Minister Dinesh Singh, Mr. Ladli Prasad Singh, and for a brief while, the Minister of state for Home Affairs, Mr. Om Mehta, were brought in as

negotiators. All of them talked with the Naga delegations for a while but then went back to their main jobs.

The talks had become a formality. Government participants did not pay proper attention to what the Naga delegation was saying. Nagas had reduced their emphasis on independence and sovereignty and talked about the Peace Mission proposal of self-determination. But the government said self-determination was possible only if the Nagas gave a prior assurance that it would lead to their remaining in India.

Notwithstanding the digressions and beating about the bush, the government was laying stress primarily on one factor: a prior assurance from the Nagas that they would surrender and lay down their arms. Other things, such as the kind of relations to be forged between the two parties were not taken up seriously and consistently.

Whoever came to negotiate with the Nagas said just one thing: accept the Indian Constitution. Nobody tried to explain what it contained. The implementation of the Indian Constitution in Nagaland had been very brutal, leading to raids on villages, searches, arrests, interrogation, forced labour, disappearances and killings. All these were not in the Constitution. Nagas did not know what all was in it. I am pretty sure that those who came to talk on behalf of the Government of India also did not know fully what all the Constitution contained. What the Nagas had seen of the Indian rule was repulsive.

Nobody took up the discussion on the Constitution in detail, or explained what were the union subjects, concurrent subjects and state subjects. How was one to accept the Constitution without a proper understanding? Anyway, as far

as the union subjects were concerned, uncle Suisa's proposals had said those were acceptable to the Nagas. Concurrent and State subjects were not explained. Those officials that came from Delhi for talks did not themselves know fully about them or their implications. How were the Nagas supposed to accept them blindly? Details were never explained to the Nagas, let alone discussed. If this was done properly, some means of making the Nagas understand the Constitution could be worked out.

Chapter 16

State Government

A sixteen-point agreement was signed in 1960 between the Government of India and the Naga People's Convention for the creation of a Nagaland state. Elections for forming the Nagaland State Assembly were held in February, 1964. An Executive Council was set up in 1961 for running the Nagaland Government.

Some of the leaders who had secured the state from the Government of India through talks in Delhi considered themselves inheritors of power and became Executive Council Member to run the new state administration. The Council formed Tribal Councils in its various Areas. Only those approved by the administration in Kohima were taken into the Tribal Councils.

The Tribal Councils passed resolutions to say that only those selected by them could contest elections to the State Assembly, so that they could be elected unopposed.

To avoid this monopoly, some Naga leaders formed a political party called the Democratic Party of Nagaland (DPN). This party wanted the Underground Nagas to come to an agreement with the Government of India. At that time there were only two Naga parties, one of the Underground and the other of

supporters of the government, which signed the sixteen-point agreement in Delhi. It was also a time when all political activity in Nagaland was controlled by the government. There was a ban on meetings and assemblies and a permit was needed to travel from one place to another. The army could arrest and detain anyone. Because of fighting going on since 1955, life had become very difficult. To obtain relief, the Naga Baptist Church Council had convened a Naga assembly at Okha, in the Lotha area, on January 1, 1964. Thousands came to it and passed a resolution for the setting up of a Peace Mission to mediate between Underground Nagas and the government, to normalize the situation.

From March to June 1964, travelling from place to place in rain and shine, the three members of the Peace Mission established contact with the Naga Underground and also held talks with the Governor of Assam, Mr. Vishnu Sahay, representing the Union Government, and persuaded both sides to agree to a ceasefire from December 6, 1964, and engage in talks for a peaceful settlement of the problem. To get the Underground to sign a ceasefire agreement, Mr. Chaliha and Rev. Scott went to Sakrabama in the Chakasang area, where some underground Naga leaders were camping. Officials and members of the Executive Council of the Naga Hills-Tuensang Area, formed in 1961, did not want any agreement with the Underground. A new political party, the Democratic Party of Nagaland (DPN) was formed and the ruling group which called itself the Naga Nationalist Organisation (NNO) did not want the new party to come to the state assembly because it stood for an agreement with the Underground.

A leader who wanted to keep the Underground out of any settlement was Mr. S.C. Jamir, who had been nominated (not

elected) to Lok Sabha (Parliament) and had been appointed as the Prime Minister's Parliamentary Secretary in the External Affairs Ministry for a year.

Before setting up the Peace Mission in 1964, Rev. Michael Scott had visited Shillong and Delhi in 1963. He brought with him a letter to Mr. Nehru from Mr. Zapuphizo, urging a resolution of the Naga problem. Mr. Nehru, after receiving the letter said in the Lok Sabha on March 19,1963, that he was ready to meet Mr. Zapuphizo in India. The only pre-condition was that violence should cease in Nagaland.

On reading Mr. Nehru's statement, Mr. Jamir who then worked in Delhi became very upset. He was among those who had signed the agreement in Delhi for the creation of a separate state of Nagaland. He was a staunch upholder of the view that the Underground should be kept out of any agreement with the Indian government. He feared that if talks took place between Mr. Nehru and Mr. Zapuphizo they may come to an agreement which would make it possible for the Naga National Council of the Underground to be considered as a representative body of the Nagas. This, he feared, could lead to the undoing of those who had signed the Delhi agreement with the Government of India in 1960. If that happened, those who had signed the Delhi agreement may lose the benefit of being considered as representatives of the Naga people.

To prevent that prospect, Mr. Jamir began asserting that the agreement of 1960 with India was the final one.

Finding that Mr. Nehru may be prepared for talks with Mr. Zapuphizo, Mr. Jamir wrote a strongly-worded letter to Shilu Ao, who had become the Chief Executive Councillor of the Interim Naga Government in Kohima, and was to become its

Chief Minister after a year. Mr. Jamir in his letter condemned Mr. Nehru's speech in the Lok Sabha. He said Nehru's speech weakened the agreement for the creation of a Nagaland State. "I cannot bear this duplicious policy of the Indian Government. I am positive that you will not endorse this statement of Mr. Nehru's that he is ready to meet Mr. Zapuphizo. If Mr. Nehru holds talks with Mr. Zapuphizo I shall resign and be ready to return to Nagaland. Staying here (in Delhi) as Parliamentary Secretary would only make us the laughing stock of all. I am confident that we, who have signed the 1960 agreement, can make more trouble in Naga Hills than members of the Underground. If the government does not want us, we will have only one course of action open to us—take back our signatures from the agreement. If the government rethinks on the agreement, then I on my part am ready to take back my signature on it." Mr. Jamir said in his letter. The Naga agreement of 1960 with the Indian government was the last one and no other agreement would be acceptable.

Later, in 2003, as Chief Minister of Nagaland, Mr. Jamir again said Nagas had made their final agreement with the Indian government.

His one aim was to see to it that the Indian government never enters into any negotiations with the Underground, and power remains in the hands of those to whom it had been given under the Delhi agreement.

Later, when the National Socialist Council of Nagalim (NSCN) split in two, Mr. Jamir began assisting its weaker Khaplang group to fight the stronger Muiva group. It is said that after the death of Mr. Zapuphizo in London in 1990, Mr. Jamir started supporting Mr. Zapuphizo's daughter, Adino,

who declared herself her father's successor and President of the Naga National Council. She is a bitter opponent of Mr. Muiva's National Socialist Council of Nagalim, with which the Indian government has been negotiating since 1997.

After the defeat of the Congress in Nagaland elections of 2003, Mr. Jamir was appointed Governor of Goa.

In elections to Nagaland State Assembly of 1964, there were 40 seats to be filled. Twelve members were to be nominated from Tuensang. In Tuensang and Mon districts elections were not to be held for ten years. This stipulation was withdrawn later. Earlier, undecided over whether to contest the elections or not, the Democratic Party did finally contest the 40 seats and won 12. The Naga National Organization of those who had signed the Delhi agreement, also won 12. The rest went to independents or non-party candidates, who later joined the Naga National Organization, which then became the ruling party and formed the State Government.

The first aim of the Democratic Party was to bring together for talks and eventual agreement the Indian Government and the Naga Underground. The party said that once these two started talks, its task would be over and it would dissolve itself. It actually did this when in 1964 the Peace Mission brought about an agreement on a ceasefire and helped in initiating talks for a settlement between the Indian government and the Underground. The party declared that since the adversaries started talks, a third party intervention was not required. It asked the ruling Naga Nationalist Organization also to dissolve itself, which it did not.

When no agreement came about after a period of talks, members of the Democratic Party woke up to their mistake of

dissolving the party too soon, and formed a new party called the United Front of Nagaland. The ruling party then began accusing it of being a party of deserters who had quit the political arena. Because of this criticism, in the second election to the Nagland State Assembly in 1969, the United Front of Nagaland won only a few seats. Twelve nominated members were brought from Tuensang to the Assembly who joined the ruling NNO.

In the mid-term Lok Sabha elections of 1971, the United Front chose its founder, Mr. Kevichusa, as its candidate. The ruling party, the Naga Nationalist Organization, put up Mr. S.C. Jamir, who had earlier been nominated to Parliament. In the election, Jamir lost to Mr. Kevichusa.

Later that year, three members of the Nagaland State Assembly lost their lives in an accident. By-elections were held for those seats. Jamir contested from Mangoya constituency and won. At that time Mr. Hokishe Sema was the Chief Minister of Nagaland. Jamir challenged Mr. Hokishe Sema's leadership and split the ruling party by winning to his side 14 members of Naga Nationalist Organization. Jamir then joined up with the opposition United Front of Nagaland and formed the State Government.

Things in Nagaland took a turn for the worse under Hokishe Sema's leadership. Without informing the State Assembly, Nagaland State, which was under the External Affairs Ministry in Delhi was put under the Ministry of Home Affairs, which was a violation of the 1960 Delhi Agreement. The Underground attacked Hokishe Sema's car as it was travelling from Dimapur to Kohima, killing the driver and a bodyguard, and wounding the Chief Minister's daughter. His car was so heavily riddled

with bullets that it was a surprise that he survived. Thereupon the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act of 1971, passed by the Centre, was imposed in Nagaland. The Armed Forces Special Powers Act was imposed in Nagaland on April 5, 1972, which enabled the army to arrest any Naga and keep him or her under detention.

Making the attack on Hokishe Sema a convenient excuse, the government of India started dealing with Nagaland harshly. India had won the war with Pakistan in 1971. Bangladesh was born. Delhi then had more troops available to send to Nagaland.

On August 31, 1972, the Indian government officially ended the ceasefire with the Underground. Encounters resumed and it was like going back to the decades of 50s and 60s. The Naga National Council and its Underground Government with whom the Indian government had been having talks, were declared illegal. About 3,000 Nagas were arrested.

The third elections to the Nagaland state assembly took place in February, 1974,. In them, the United Democratic Front (the new name of the United Front of Nagaland party) obtained 25 seats, the Naga Nationalist Organization (NNO) 23, and independents 12. The independents were flown from their constituencies to the Chief Minister's residence in Kohima in army helicopters to ensure that they supported the ruling party and helped it remain in office. But some independents escaped from the Chief Minister's residence and joined the United Democratic Front, increasing its strength to 32. The total number of seats in the Assembly at that time were 60. In such a situation the Governor, Mr. Ladli Prasad Singh, had no option but to invite the leader of the United Democratic Front, Mr. Vizol, to form the State Government.

The army was upset because it beleived Mr. Vizol was a sympathizer of the Underground. It started making moves to pull down the Government, in which task it was joined by Union Government agencies. In March 1975, they succeeded in winning over some members of the United Democratic Front and toppled the Vizol government. The army kept those it had won over from the Democratic Front at its Rangapahar cantonment.

Jasokie of the Naga Nationalist Organization then became the Chief Minister after toppling the Vizol government, but his government lasted barely ten days. A majority of members remained with Vizol. The President's Rule was then imposed on the state, which lasted 32 months. In no other state of the country has President's Rule been imposed for that length of time.

In the wake of the President's Rule, Indira Gandhi imposed Emergency in the country. Many more were arrested in Nagaland and sent to jails in Assam and other places. During that period the ruling Naga Nationalist Organization merged with the Congress and ended its separate existence. Its leaders went over to the Congress, helped by officials who wielded power because of the Emergency. They began terrorizing the opposition and its associates and also supporters of the Underground. Many members of the United Democratic Front were arrested, and their relations were not allowed to meet them in jail.

Around this time, on November 11, 1975, the Shillong Accord between the Government of India and some persons described as representatives of 'Underground Organizations' was signed and was made public some months later. The Accord was opposed by some Underground Nagas, who later

set up their own organization, the National Socialist Council of Nagalim (NSCN). With the end of Emergency, the sixth elections to the Lok Sabha were held in the second half of 1977. In these elections, the candidate of the United Democratic Front, Mrs. Rano Shaija, won, and the Congress lost, as it did in most parts of the country. The Janata Party formed the government in Delhi.

In November 1977 elections to Nagaland Assembly were held. The United Democratic Front (UDF) won 35 seats, the Naga National Organization which had merged with the Congress won 15, and Independents nine. Most of the Independents joined the United Democratic Front. Mr. Vizol then formed his second UDF government. Rumours were spread saying the Front was helped by the Underground.

In October 1970 Vizol dismissed his deputy Chief Minister, S. Jamir, for his involvement in financial scandals. Jamir was Minister of Public Works and Public Health Engineering Departments, which had incurred vast expenditures in purchases. Because of these scandals the United Democratic Front lost its Lok Sabha seat in the mid-term elections of 1980.

Once again a chain of events to sabotage the ruling party and take away its members began. In April 1980 the Vizol government fell. Jamir then became the Chief Minister and set up a coalition government which remained in power for 48 days. Then in June 1980 members of the United Democratic Front were joined by non-Congress members of the Assembly and formed a new government under the leadership of Jasokei. An agreement was to be signed between Jasokei's Naga National Party and the United Democratic Front. But just then a

member of the Front, Mr. Huska Sumi, set up an independent party of his own, proclaiming that his was the real United Democratic Front. Huska went to the Election Commission with a petition. The Commission turned it down. Huska then went to Delhi High Court and the Supreme Court which also turned his petition down.

This legal battle went on until the announcement of the fifth elections to the Nagaland Assembly. On December 3, 1981, at its conference in Kohima the United Democratic Front changed its name to Naga National Democratic Party, when some members of the Naga National Party joined it.

The fifth elections to the Nagaland Assembly took place in November 1982. The new named party won 24 seats. Huska's United Democratic Front won one seat and independents eleven. With the help of Independent candidates, Jamir, who had joined the Congress, formed the government.

The sixth elections to the State Assembly took place in November 1987. For the first time the Congress won a majority with 34 seats, and Hokishe Sema became the Chief Minister again. But in July 1988, thirteen members formed a Regional Congress Party with K.L. Chishi as President. On the following day, the leader of the opposition, Vanmuzo, of the Naga National Democratic Party, formed a coalition with the Regional Congress Party and four Independents. He thus had 35 members in a house of 59. The ruling party of Hokishe Sema became a minority and Vanmuzo presented his claim to form the government.

The Governor at the time was retired General Krishna Rao. He sided with the Congress and on August 8, 1988, had the State placed under President's Rule. Vanmuzo appealed against

this to Gauhati High Court which ruled that the President's Rule was not rightful or legal.

Following Huska's quitting the coalition, the Naga National Democratic Party, on September 21, 1988, changed its name to Nagaland People's Council.

Jamir Environment

The seventh election to the State Assembly took place on January 21, 1989, in which Jamir of the Congress won and became the Chief Minister. But he remained in that position only for one year and four months. Then, K.L. Chishi became the Chief Minister on May 16, 1990, and held that position for two years. On April 2, 1992, due to frequent floor crossing by members from one party to another, President's Rule was imposed again, which remained in force until February 2, 1993. The Congress won in the election that followed and Jamir became Chief Minister again. In 2003 the Congress lost and a new party, the Naga People's Front, formed the government. The Front is still in power.

On February 11, 1994, three ministers of Jamir's Congress party, and five members of Nagaland Assembly wrote a joint letter on the deteriorating situation in the state to Prime Minister. Mr. Narasimha Rao. They said that the majority members of the Assembly were against Jamir but they had been persuaded by Party advisers from Delhi to accept him. Jamir was not making efforts to solve the Naga problem. On the contrary, he was making it more complicated. Instead of persuading the Underground to cooperate and join deliberations for peace, he was alienating them. Jamir, they said, was supplying money and weapons to a section of the Underground and pitting it against

another. Jamir was also the Minister of Supplies. He was selling in the open market subsidized grain sent by the Centre and not distributing it to villages, for whom it was meant. Profits from these sales were partly going to his family members, and some were being given to a section of the Underground to keep it under his control.

The letter further said that Jamir, his brother M.Y. Jamir, the Minister of Forests, and his cousin, Tungshi Longkumar, Minister of Cooperatives, had together formed a private army, known as the 9th and the 27th brigades. Through these, opponents of Jamir were being wiped out and money was being extorted from the people. Because of the terror let loose by them, Naga traders were being forced to flee Nagaland to save their lives.

On orders of Chief Minister Jamir, a police officer gave weapons to this private army and some persons in the Underground. It was later said that those weapons had been stolen. On recovery, 2,000 rounds of AK 47 rifle and some cartridges of 9 milimeter pistols remained untraced.

Jamir was trying to give the impression that by dividing the Underground and aiding one section of it, he was helping the Indian government, the letter against him stated. But in fact he was obstructing peace efforts with such tactics. By encouraging terrorism he was endangering the lives of some assembly members, ministers and others, and strengthening camps of terrorists in neighbouring Burma.

The letter went on to say that in the course of Naga-Kuki tribal clashes in Nagaland, Jamir gave 200 tons of rice on subsidized prices to three Kuki villages. The rice was sold in the open market, which brought ten lakhs rupees to some

combatants. The Kukis bought weapons from that money and killed many, among whom was an IAS officer of a state.

Jamir loaned the money sent by Delhi for development purposes to his friends and relatives and enriched them. The Naga people did not get that money. This open corruption had angered the youth and many had in protest joined the Underground.

The letter to the Prime Minister said, "we are pained to see the losses caused to the state and the country by such selfish and traitorous actions of Jamir. His continuance in office as Chief Minister would, far from benefiting the state, harm it, and worsen the situation. Therefore, in the interest of the Party (Congress), we are requesting you to change the Chief Minister."

Four members of an opposition party, the Naga People's Council, sent a letter to the Chief Election Commissioner, Mr. M.S. Gill, about the eighth elections to the Nagaland State Assembly, that were held on February 15, 1993. The Congress had won the elections. The letter said that many ministers and Lok Sabha members of the Congress had come to canvass in these elections. Because of that, the central and state government machinery became involved in assisting the Congress Party in Nagaland. The Election Commission either suppressed or dismissed a great many complaints of malpractices.

Pointing out that the next elections were due in February 1998, the letter appealed to the Chief Election Commissioner to keep the coming elections impartial and free. It appealed to the Election Commissioner to post a representative in Kohima to hear complaints and take on-the-spot steps to curb malpractices. There were 12 counting centres for 60 assembly

seats. The selection of premises for safe keeping of ballot boxes should be made jointly by all parties, the letter said. The Commission should cancel an election in which there were malpractices.

Claims of 90% voting in a constituency should be considered abnormal. Returning officers should be asked to make inquiries to ascertain the situation and take appropriate action.

In the elections held earlier, capturing of polling booths was a common practice. If this happened again, the letter demanded, counting of votes at captured booth should be suspended.

Earlier, the Commandant of the Nagaland Armed Police voted on behalf of all his men. This practice should end and men should vote themselves in person, as provided in the election code.

With this letter was sent an account of malpractices in February 1993 elections. Here are some:

The Mokokchung state assembly constituency, with 4,700 voters and only three polling booths was the smallest in the state. Early in the morning of February 15, 1993, Congress supporters opened fire in the town and spilled animal blood on streets to make people believe that a clash had occurred between security forces and the Underground. People did not come out of their homes on hearing gunshots. But when the shooting stopped, they came out to vote. They were then told that voting had ended at 08.30 a.m. and by nine all ballot boxes had been sealed and sent for safe keeping. After counting, it was declared that the voting was 97.31 percent. All this was done in the presence of the police, para-military forces and supervising

officers of the Election Commission. The congress candidate in the constituency was Mr. S.C. Jamir, the Chief Minister.

In the electoral area of Jangpetkong, agents of the opposition party, the Naga People's Council, were not allowed into the village and voting was completed in a few hours. This was done with the knowledge of officials and police.

In Tuli constituency, polling booths were captured and upon complaints, voting was postponed to February 18. But on that day the security officials said that the situation was bad and did not allow voters to cast vote. However, ballot boxes were sent to officers concerned and it was declared that voting had taken place normally.

In Kohima it was found that ballot papers were printed in different colours. A complaint was made and it was demanded that some ballet papers be picked up from the tables and compared with receipts to see whether the receipts and the papers were of the same colour. On receiving complaints, two supervisors at the Centre went away to some place with the returning officer. Coming back after half an hour they said that it was not necessary for ballet papers to be of the same colour! Voting went on.

In northern Angami-2 constituency, there were three candidates whose election symbols were rooster, hand and umbrella. Ballot papers were issued. But the symbol of umbrella did not figure in any. A scam was suspected. Agents of the Naga Peoples' Council made a complaint and demanded that the counting of votes be stopped immediately. But the returning officer turned down the complaint on the advice of central supervisors and counting continued. It turned out that rooster, hand and umbrella were election symbols of candidates

of Shamator-Chesor constituency, 200 kilometres away from Kohima.

At Fomching, a candidate came with his 15 supporters to the polling station at Langwa village on the night of February 14, 1993, and at gunpoint took away all election papers, including ballet papers as well as the election officer. They took them to a forest, ordered the officer to unpack the papers, stamped the ballot papers, put them in boxes and sealed them. On the polling day these people created a commotion and chased away the election officer and his assistants. The officer, Mr. Gogoi, sent a complaint but it was not taken into account by the returning officer of Mon town. News of it reached Kohima when the counting was over, and the Congress candidate had won by 532 votes.

In Socheyyung-Sitmee constituency, a government veterinarian, Mr. Meren, was made the electoral officer of Yangjitone polling station. He did not go there but sent someone else, who was the younger brother of the Congress candidate. Long lines of voters formed at the station but voting did not start. When voters demanded that voting should begin, this person who had been made the officer in charge there left the place and went over to the election administrative center at Piphrey. There he said the situation in Yangjitone was serious and so no votes were cast. Then on the basis of votes cast at other centres, the Congress candidate was declared elected. Yangjitone was a stronghold of the opposition. They had 1,400 voters there.

At Tamloo polling booth the number of votes cast were 52 more than the total number of registered voters. Despite this, the Congress candidate was declared elected.

In the electoral division of Chemenyu, Aolengden, Tapi, Moka, Tuensang-*sadar*, Pungro-Kifirey and some other polling booths were captured with the help of the Underground. The administration and security forces were fully aware of the presence of Underground there, but no attempt was made to drive them away.

It was said that the Congress party had 1,24,000 fake ballot papers printed. These papers were used at many places.

The Congress indulged in illegal practices at 17 polling stations and emerged victorious in all of them.

The tenth election to the Nagaland State Assembly took place on February 26, 2003. In this one too there were many malpractices. In fact, these were so many that at 51 centres votes had to be cast again.

So many reports of assaults by political parties, their pressure tactics and armed threats came in two days before voting, on February 24, that section 144 had to be imposed all over Nagaland and curfew declared on February 24 night.

In the course of election, four people, including two women, were killed. On the polling day, February 26, at the gate of the polling centre of Lajami in Zuneboto, two women, Kiholi and Kiyesu, were shot dead.

At Zuneboto again, a police force surrounded the Deputy Commissioner's office and damaged it because ballot papers of constables sent to that post had got lost. Because election work kept them constantly on move, 400 policemen had asked that their ballot papers be sent to them by post. Only 150 of these were received and the rest, it was believed, were misused to increase the votes of some candidates. Incensed, the policemen surrounded and damaged the Deputy Commissioner's office.

From Mokokchung district, where the Congress Chief Minister, Jamir, was contesting, came many reports of disturbance and threat. According to the former Deputy Chief Minister, I.K. Sema, 200 uniforms of the Indian Army Reserve Battalion were ordered to be made, which Jamir's Congressmen wore to threaten the supporters of the opposition parties, and beat them up. A former member of the Lok Sabha, Imchalemba, complained to the Election Commission of the high-handed and pro-Congress attitude of the men of the Indian Reserve Battalion and wrote that it be kept out of election work. The State Police Director General, Hayso Mao, said that complaints had been received of assistance to a political party by men of the Indian Reserve Battalion. A candidate of the Samta Party from Jampetkong registered a complaint that his party workers had been so badly beaten and injured by the men of this battalion that some had to be sent to Mokokchung hospital first and then to the bigger hospital at Dimapur for treatment. On February 21, one jawan of the Central Reserve Police and one civilion, Mohayamo Kikon, were shot.

Food Scandals

The biggest scandal was in food supply. The Centre sent food to Nagaland at subsidized prices. Nagas for most part grow enough food for their needs, except in Dimapur, Kohima, Mokokchung, Tuensang and a couple of other towns. The Centre sent a great amount of subsidized supplies. Sometimes as in 1995, the Nagaland government was not able to lift all that food. Of 3,66,743 metric tons of food sent, Nagaland was not able to lift 43,807 metric tons only. The reality was that a

lot of this food never reached Nagaland. It was sold in Bengal, Assam and Bangladesh, on the way. Sent by the Centre at low prices it was sold in the open market by the Chief Minister, other ministers and officials, bringing them a lot of money.

Rice came from the Centre at two rupees and fifty paise a kilo. It was sold in the open market for six rupees a kilo, at a profit of three rupees and fifty paise a kilo. Lakhs of rupees were made by this open market sale. From the Centre, edible oil, wheat and other food items were also sent at subsidized prices and sold in the open market at high prices. An inspection of seven government food godowns in Nagaland showed that 873.83 metric tons of fine rice worth rupees 43.96 lakhs was missing. Of the 400 tons of edible oil worth rupees 69.25 lakhs sent, 277 metric tons never reached Nagaland.

Contractors, who, from February to July 1993 had lifted from the Central godown of Nagaland fine rice worth 22.85 lakh rupees, had not delivered it to distributing centres for two years, till May 1995.

No accounts could be found of foodstuff worth Rs.987.22 lakhs that godowns of Nagaland had taken from 1992-93 to 1994-95. The people for whom this was meant never got them. Nor was there any account of how many received the supplies from low-cost distribution centres.

The Food Supplies Department incurred an unnecessary expenditure of Rs.165.39 lakhs by having the food transported to godowns by private carriers when it had its own fleet of 54 trucks.

For a year until 1993, the Central Sales Organization had given on credit 5,351.26 quintals of fine rice, costing Rs.23.90 lakhs, when credit sales were wholly prohibited. The sum had not been recovered even after two years.

For prisoners rice was to be bought at Rs.493 a quintal from the Food Supplies Department. But it was bought from the open market in 1995 at Rs.900 a quintal.

On February 4, 1993, it was discovered that rice and sugar worth Rs.27.61 lakhs were missing from the Central sales department. No steps were taken following this discovery.

Store keepers of a Central organization in 1962 embezzled Rs.9.07 lakhs from the sales of rice.

In Kohima the new secretariat building was to be completed in 1985-86 at a cost of Rs.550 lakhs. But it was completed in 1995, at a cost of Rs.9518.97 lakhs.

Cots for use in jails were bought without floating tenders till 1993, at Rs. 6,000 a cot. For the Nagaland Administrative Organization, curtains etc. were bought, from December 1991 to March 1992, for Rs.7.26 lakhs. These were never used because the building was not ready until 1995.

The Director of Information bought, at a cost of Rs.12.40 lakhs colour TV sets, video recorders and generators for his outstation offices. He gave them without obtaining receipts to individuals, clubs, organizations, schools and colleges. In March 1992 the same department gave Rs.3.90 lakhs to a foreign publisher for printing a book, '*Our Colourful World: Nagaland*'. The book was neither published nor money recovered.

At Dimapur, for five years until 1995, a mechanical engineer spent Rs.14.05 lakhs on salaries of ten bulldozer drivers, when only four were needed.

In the same town, from one year's payment of electricity bills till January 11, 1992, Rs.5.90 lakhs were misappropriated. In another electricity subdivision the treasurer misappropriated Rs.3.02 lakhs of payments received. The state electricity

department incurred a loss of Rs. 5.45 crores in generation and distribution of power.

Until March 1995 there were nine trading organizations run by five government companies and departments. The assets of the five companies amounted to Rs.20.79 lakhs. Taxes and other payments of two of these companies amounted to Rs.3.20 crores and Rs.2.37 crores, till March 31, 1995. But these did not pay their dues for 12 years.

For raising the living standard of those who were very poor, an overall village development scheme was prepared in 1978-79. The Centre and the state gave Rs.1,504.84 lakhs to that scheme. But this amount was used by high level income groups and the low level ones got nothing.

Two police divisions bought goods worth Rs.13.36 crores, which were not needed. These were auctioned later.

The building contractor of a hospital in Dimapur was paid Rs.28.56 lakhs in 1992 as compensation because his machinery and men were sitting idle. There was no provision for this kind of compensation to contractors.

A loss of Rs.100.24 lakhs was incurred by the government in not levying the new rate of tax on forest produce. A shortfall of Rs.46.33 lakhs resulted because taxes from sawmills were not collected.

Much light has been thrown on corruption in the state in reports of the Comptroller and Auditor-General. According to its report for 1994-95, contractors for renewal and restoration of jails in Nagaland were paid Rs.17.06 lakhs for no work done.

In 1994-95, Rs.516.50 crores came from the Central Government for the development of the state. A flood of

contracts was created in the state. Ministers and officers made huge amounts of money in giving out contracts. Contractors and suppliers became millionaires.

I shall now give some examples of other scandals: Nagaland was getting every three months a permit from the Regional Controller of Cement in Calcutta for importing 11,000 tons of cement. Thirty to forty percent of this quantity was bought from cement factories in Orissa. Contractors then got paid for transporting the cement from Orissa to Dimapur. But this cement, bought at controlled rates, was sold in the open market for huge profits. For the state's own works, cement was bought from the open market in Dimapur. On being questioned over this, a Minister said he was not bound to go by rules.

Near Dimapur some forests were cut to clear land for growing sugarcane and a sugar mill was set up. Sugarcane was grown, but it fell short of its need. It was bought from Assam. The mill ran at a loss and it was closed down. The loss was Rs. 35 lakhs in 1980-81. Sugar produced by it was to be sold in the open market at six rupees thirty paise a kilo. But the minister, K.L. Chishi, said sugar was a necessary item of food and so it should be sold at the controlled rate of three rupees and 25 paise a kilo. Two thousand tons were given to a trader at this rate.

A paper mills was set up at Tuli. Its losses were so heavy that it too had to be closed down.

Nagaland had its own quota of all materials and articles sold under the quota system. Quota of wax for the manufacture of candles, for stainless steel articles and tin sheets. These were obtained at controlled rates and sold at high profits in the open market.

For establishing gardens, the Nagaland Plantation Cooperative Development Corporation was set up in 1991. The Planning Commission gave Rupees two crores for this. The overall cost of gardens was estimated at rupees seventeen crores. The state was to acquire land from villages and lay out gardens over an area of 7,000 hectares. It was decided that 40 percent land in Nagaland was suitable for coffee plantation. Today not even a kilo of coffee is grown there.

Each village had to have a compounder and a government medical store. Plans were made for first aid facilities at some centres. The Planning Commission gave money for this work in 1980. But adulterated medicines were bought and the manufacturers and dealers of such medicines became rich overnight. Medical goods for government hospitals were bought at exorbitant prices. A stainless steel kidney-tray, available in Delhi for Rs.18, was bought by Nagaland for Rs.1,800. A supplier of medical goods in Delhi became a millionaire overnight by supplying goods to hospitals in Nagaland. He also became a leading figure of the Congress Party in Delhi.

Compounders appointed in village dispensaries in Nagaland either didn't turn up for work or came drunk.

The number of students in schools went up by lakhs. But there were no jobs for them on finishing studies. They began visiting ministers for permits to buy rice at controlled rates and sell it in the open market for a profit. Some sold the permits to traders. School teachers began shirking work. Their salaries were not paid in time. Many resisted being sent to schools in the interior. Some became agents of ministers. The standard of education fell sharply. Students of ninth and tenth classes did not know simple addition or multiplication. Many left studies.

Some young men sought contracts for building and widening roads. They would widen a road by a foot and charge money for ten feet. Many roads were 'widened' in this fashion.

The Congress government that had come into office borrowed so much money that it couldn't pay interest on it. It took a loan of Rs.300 crores at 18 percent interest from Peerless Company in Calcutta. For modernizing the police force it took Rs.300 crores loan at high interest from a life insurance company. The work of modernizing the force did not proceed, and the interest kept mounting.

The government received Rs.33 crores from the Oil and Natural Gas Commission for oil production in the state. Where that money was spent was never made clear by the government. It got into difficulty over payment of loan instalments and interest. Most loans were taken during the tenure of Jamir as Chief Minister.

The state of Nagaland was created quite late, in 1963, and so corruption arrived there late. But it spread fast. All money for development and wages of Government Servants came from Delhi. It was said that Nagaland was a backward state and development in it should take place at a fast pace. Money came for it fast. Contractors were to build roads, schools, hospitals and government offices, lay water pipelines, provide electricity and carry out other work. Ministers and officials gave contracts for that. In that process all became rich quickly.

Among its major scandals was that of the Nagaland State Lottery. The state lottery agent sold tickets worth Rs.38,297 crores. Of this he gave to the state only Rs.40.20 crores, or about ten percent and kept ninety percent to himself.

The report of the Comptroller and Auditor General on this scandal was placed on the table of the Nagaland State Assembly in 1998. The report showed that the lottery agent had, from October 1993 to November 1997, floated 83,254 lotteries, from which he earned Rs.38,297 crores from sale of tickets. Newspapers said that this was the biggest scandal in the country.

Who was this lottery agent? He was Manikumar Subba, who is now a Lok Sabha member from Assam, and whose citizenship is being inquired into by the Supreme Court. It is alleged that he is not an Indian but a Nepali.

Each day he held 55 draws, from which his income was Rs.45.75 lakhs a day. He later transferred his business from Nagaland to Delhi.

When the scandal was raised in the Legislative Assembly, Chief Minister Jamir came to his rescue and said that the report was exaggerated and that all the lottery tickets that were printed were not sold.

After some years when the Union Home Minister came to Kohima, he was asked about this scandal. His reply was that an inquiry into Subba's case had not progressed because the Chief Minister did not give permission for a case to be brought against him. For filing a case the Chief Minister's permission was necessary. The Chief Minister himself was among those involved, so how could he give the permission? Jamir in 1995 had reduced the state's share of Rs.6,000 rupees from each bumper draw and its share from the other draws, to Rs. 4,000, thereby inflicting a loss of Rs.10 crores on the state.

It was said that Nagaland had to be brought to the mainstream of life in India. Whether it made to the mainstream

in other spheres or not, it certainly did so in corruption. It in fact forged ahead of the rest of India.

Until the elections of 2000, after coming into being in 1963, Nagaland had 17 chief ministers.

For a population of 19,89,000 in 2001, it had 92,000 government officials.

In ten five year plans from 1961 to 2002, Rs.1,22,782.57 lakh were spent there and its expenditure on government was Rs. 3,51,112.96 lakhs.

Killings

Towards the end of the nineties many people were killed. On March 27, 1997, Zukiye, who had contested the last elections, and his three brothers. Tohibi, Khetibhi and Vikato were killed. Earlier, on March 3, 1997, Abraham Tangkhul was killed three miles from Dimapur. On the same day a jeep driver who was coming to Kohima from Zuneboto was killed near Chajuba and also two members of the Underground. On the same day from the home of Longyao Wonshi Tangkhul, who was an Under Secretary of the Nagaland Government and brother of Manipur Forest Minister, Arthur, his two sons and a nephew were kidnapped. One son and the nephew were killed, while the other son and he himself managed to escape. On March 4, 1997, a trader, Salem Tangkhul, was killed in Dimapur. On March 5, Impang Village in Wokha district was surrounded and fired upon, in which a pair of twin brothers 26 years of age, one woman and her four year old son, one member of the Underground and one Indian soldier, totaling six people, were killed. On March 6, in Kohima Chota Basti, someone opened fire at ten in the morning, killing one person of the Tangkhul

tribe. On March 7, some armed men broke into the house of lawyer, Samuel Tangkhul. He was not at home. The armed men killed two of his bodyguards, one a Sema and another a Konyak. The leader of the opposition in Nagaland Assembly, Mr. Vamuzo came to Delhi and reported these incidents to the Union Government. He said the Government of Mr. Jamir, the Chief Minister of Nagaland, far from saving the lives of the people, was inciting a group of the Underground to kill people of Tangkhul tribe. The Tangkhuls are Nagas of Manipur.

Chapter 17

Naga National Council Split : New Body Formed

After the Delhi talks broke down in 1968, the face-off between the Underground Angamis and the Sema tribes became sharper.

When Naga delegates came home after the last Delhi talks, a session of the Underground Parliament (Tatar Ho Ho) was convened. Angami leaders were unhappy over the Underground Prime Minister Kughato Sukhai's failure to give the leadership of the talks to Mr. Zapuphizo. His performance was analyzed and a motion of no-confidence was passed against him because he had not "succeeded in persuading the Indian government to accept Naga sovereignty". But actually, what the Angamis wanted was that Kughato tell Delhi that Zapuphizo would lead the talks. He had not done so.

Because of this criticism, Kughato resigned his prime ministership of the Underground Government. His younger brother, Kaito, Commander of the Naga army, had already been removed from that office and for a while was made the defence minister which position had also come to an end. In his place, Mowu Angami, from Zapuphizo's village, Khonoma, was made the Naga army chief.

The President of the Underground Government, Mr. Scato Swu, was replaced by Reverend Mhasiu. Mhasiu was from Khonoma, Zapuphizo's village. All Semas in high posts were removed and some offices were given to Angamis. A quarrel over leadership had been going on between the two tribes.

On October 31, when Mhasiu was going to Kohima from Chidema by jeep, he was abducted by the men of general Zuheto Sema and taken to Murasu camp and made a prisoner.

Two days later, Sema leaders set up a government of their own, the Underground Revolutionary Government of Nagaland.

On coming to know that Sema leaders had captured Mhasiu, the Underground Federal Government made Chambemo Muri of the Lotha tribe its President.

A new group of Naga army had gone to China for arms in 1968, under the leadership of General Mowu. In early 1969, it returned bringing weapons. On way back it reached the Sema area from Tuensang in Nagaland. It did not know the latest developments in the growing split between the Angamis and the Semas. It came to a camp of Sema General, Zuheto, in the Sema area, where its men deposited the arms brought from China. Then when Mowu was asleep at night some Sema fighters made him a prisoner and handed him over to the Indian army, which flew him to Delhi for interrogation.

By then some Sema Underground leaders had decided to accept being a part of India, about which Mowu had not known.

The former President of the Underground Federal Government, Scato Su, and his Sema colleagues decided in 1971 that they should accept bring part of the Indian Union.

The Chief Minister of Nagaland at that time was Mr. Hokishe Sema. He made contacts with this section of the Underground leaders and it was decided the new revolutionary government of Scato Swu, 'General' Zuheto and the Naga fighters with them would lay down their arms and surrender to the Indian government. The surrender was carried out on August 16, 1973, and signalled the end of the short-lived revolutionary government.

Following an agreement with the Indian government and Sema surrender, it was decided that Scato Swu, former President of the Underground government, would be made a member of the Rajya Sabha, or the Upper House of Indian Parliament, and 'General' Zuheto's men would be taken in the Indian Boarder Security Force, with the 'general' as their commander.

The Naga National Council, its Underground 'Federal' Government and the rest of the Naga army played no part in this surrender. They had already signed the Shillong Accord with India in 1975.

Earlier, the Naga fighters' traffic with China had increased considerably. Many of their men had set up camps in the Somra Tract of Burma. The pressure of the Indian army on the Underground in Nagaland had also increased. Naga struggle had got divided. Some Sema fighters were in Myanmar, and one of their leaders, Isak Chishi Swu, who while going to China, was stopped by the Myanmar (Burmese) army and was not able to go across, remained in northern Myanmar.

The Angami leadership had concluded the 1975 Accord with India signed by the Nagaland governor, Mr. Ladli Prasad Singh on behalf of Delhi. The agreement had said the 'remaining issues' between India and Nagas would be discussed in future

talks between the Indian government and Zapuphizo.

Naga fighters staying in camps in Myanmar fiercely opposed the Shillong Accord. Their leaders, Isak Swu and Muiva, said the Accord was a shameful betrayal of the Naga people.

Naga youngmen however continued to join the Underground which showed that the movement was still strong. Availability of weapons was no problem as the route to bring them from Yunnan in China was open. Naga Underground was able to collect money from traders, contractors and government officials, and even directly from government departments in Nagaland and Manipur for the movement's expenses. This money came from Delhi to Nagaland and Manipur for their development. The underground called this collection as tax and gave receipt for it. It set up an accounts department and maintained books.

The overall situation for the Naga Underground was not bad. It had set up a new organization, the National Socialist Council of Nagalim (NSCN). Since it included all Naga areas, its name was changed to Nagalim. It had good bases in Myanmar from where it was able to visit not only China but also Thailand, where it had established offices, residences and good contacts. Some Naga young men married Thai women and obtained papers to live in Bangkok.

Improving its situation, the NSCN had resumed fighting with the Indian Army and was inflicting casualties. An example of its strong guerilla action was an attack on Fakmali camp of the Indian Army in Tuensang, in which it killed seven soldiers and an officer and snatched a machinegun, two sten guns, three rifles and a wireless set. It conducted several armed attacks in Manipur and Nagaland. This worried the Indian government.

It started sending messages to NSCN through emissaries for a ceasefire and negotiations. One emissary was Pastor Chinmang. Muiva's reply was that talks were not possible under the Indian Constitution. It was then decided that these will be without any pre-condition. It was also agreed that the talks will be at the Prime Ministers' level and in a third country.

Earlier, the Naga National Council group of Zapuphizo had tried to attack the NSCN and finish it off, but failed to do so. It had sent armed men into Burma to kill or capture NSCN leaders. They succeeded in killing 72 and capturing Issac and Muiva. But the two managed to escape.

The Government of India believed that because of the big flow of money from Delhi to Nagaland, the lot of the Nagas would have improved so much that most people would no longer consider going underground to join the struggle. It believed that the money would have divided the Naga society and brought into being a class of suppliers, contractors and officials who would be busy making money. Such a class had indeed come up in towns and cities. But most Nagas live in villages for whom life had not changed all that much and they continued to send their youngmen to join the fighters.

Escaping from captivity in 1978, Isak and Muiva, came to the Chindwin river, where they succeeded in calling a big Naga meeting to set up their new organization on January 30, 1980, and subsequently their Underground Government. Muiva succeeded in getting a number of Naga yongmen from Manipur to join him. Some of them had college education.

A group, led by Khaplang, of Burmese Nagas, had broken away from of NSCN and set up its own unit, but it was small and had influence only among Hemi Nagas of Burma and

Konyaks along the border. It supported the Indian side and took to fighting the Issac-Muiva NSCN and favoured the Nagaland State Government, from which it received help.

Being an educated person, Muiva did not encourage tribalism. Persons of other tribes got good positions in the NSCN. Within a short period the NSCN became a strong political and fighting force.

Although no talks are held with the Kaplang group, the Indian government accepted a ceasefire with it.

Through intermediaries it was decided that the NSCN Chairman, Isak Chishi Swu, and General Secretary, Th. Muiva, should meet Indian Prime Minister, Narasimha Rao, on June 12, 1995 in Paris in the course of Rao's visit to France. After that visit, a ceasefire and peace talks were agreed upon. Narasimha Rao's Principal Secretary, Mr. Verma, went to New York in September 1995 to meet the two Naga leaders. Following this, talks took place between the former Home Minister, Rajesh Pilot, and Muiva in Bangkok on November 17, 1996. Talks were then held by the Prime Minister Deve Gowda with the two Naga leaders, in Zurich on February 3, 1997.

It was decided that negotiations be resumed for a peaceful solution of the Naga problem. For this purpose a ceasefire of three months was declared, on August 1, 1997. Three important decisions were taken by both sides: No pre-conditions to talks which would be held at prime ministerial level in a third country.

Later, the ceasefire kept getting yearly extension. Then, in 2007 it was decided at a Bangkok meeting that the ceasefire should continue as long the talks went on and that there was no need to extend it from year to year.

At first the ceasefire was for three months, till October 25, 1997. Its conditions were that the Indian army, para-military forces and police would not raid villages and NSCN camps. Naga fighters too would not attack the Indian army. Indian army would not patrol places within a kilometer of NSCN camps, the list of which was given to the Government of India. NSCN camps were not to be set up in urban areas and near main roads. Roads and traffic were not to be blocked and development work was not to be obstructed. For proper implementation of ceasefire conditions a committee was set up, consisting of nominees of the Government of India and the NSCN, with some members of non-government organizations.

At the first talks which took place with prime minister Narasimha Rao in Paris on June 12, 1995, it was declared unanimously: "We believe in political solutions. We have to find solutions through political negotiations, with courage and trust." The second round of talks took place with Prime Minister Deve Gowda in Zurich on February 3, 1997, at which Deve Gowda said: "we believe in peaceful methods and we have to find political solutions through peaceful means".

The third talks were held with Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee in Paris on September 30, 1998, at which Mr. Vajpayee said: "Putting aside fighting, we have to find a political solution to this political problem."

The fourth round of talks was held with Mr. Vajpayee at Osaka, Japan, on December 8, 2002, at which he said: "A solution will have to be worked out through peaceful means in a calm atmosphere."

The fifth round was also held with Mr. Vajpayee, on January 10, 2003, at which he said: "the peacemaking process will continue. A new chapter is about to begin."

The sixth round of talks were held with Prime Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh, in Delhi on December 7, 2004, at which it was said: "All efforts will be made to find a solution. A solution acceptable to both parties can only be found through talks."

The seventh round was also held with Dr. Manmohn Singh on February 1, 2005, at which he said that he had engaged three of his ministers to take part in the talks. "We (India and the Nagas) have to decide upon the nature of the relations between us." (The three ministers put on the job were Oscar Fernandes, Prithviraj Chauhan and S. Raghupati.)

Until March 1, 2005, talks were held 38 times.

In the talks the Indian government conceded that the Nagas were a people with their own unique history and identity.

India said that every round of talks could not be held at the prime ministerial level, nor could the prime minister go abroad for the purpose.

Then, Swaraj Kaushal, who had worked in peace talks with Mizos, was appointed as the representative of the Prime Minister and he had five meetings with the Naga leaders from May 25, 1998, to March 27, 1999, in Bangkok, Zurich, Amsterdam and Paris.

In July 1999 K. Padmanabhaiah, who had retired as Home Secretary, was appointed in place of Swaraj Kaushal to talk to Naga leaders.

It was decided that talks should take place in India. Accordingly, Padmanabhaiah, on behalf of the Government of India, invited the Naga leaders to Delhi, and they came from Amsterdam on December 4, 2004.

In ten years the talks have made some progress but have not come to a decisive stage. Naga leaders do not talk much

about sovereignty. Perhaps they have seen that in Europe most countries have put aside the issue of national sovereignty to create the European Union. Some countries gave up their own currencies for a common currency, the Euro. They have put an end to obstacles created by national boundaries and their people are now free to live and work in one another's country. Putting aside the idea of national sovereignty and exclusiveness, these European states are now working together in trade, commerce, investment, employment, and other fields. Naga leaders have witnessed all this and understand the benefits.

They also realize that Nagalim would be in need of assistance from India.

The main issue on which the talks are stuck is unification of Naga territories, which at the moment are spread in a number of Indian states. These are in Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur and Assam. Unifying them is the objective for Nagas. But the states where these are do not want to give them up for the formation of a united Naga state or Nagalim. Manipur is apprehensive that if its Naga districts are separated from it, then it will be left only with the small Imphal river valley, which may not be considered viable to be a separate state. With the separation of these districts the aid it receives from Delhi will be reduced and Manipur will not be able to meet its expenditure.

Chapter 18

The Second Cease Fire

Nagaland is mostly villages. Its village society which was cohesive earlier, is divided now, because of politics. Many national parties have come and established offices in the state. New local parties have also been set up. All are in the race for office. Elections keep coming up and in Nagaland more often, before a five-year Assembly term. From 1964 till now there have been 12 elections and the State government has changed as many, if not more times. The Naga Underground fighting for half a century does not contest these elections but does indirectly influence them in the hope that if a sympathetic party comes into power it may help it in finding a settlement.

The people want a settlement between the Government of India and the Underground. Members of the Nagaland Baptist Church Council are an important element of this society. Their effort is to reduce the conflict, end the strife and bring peace. The Baptist Church plays an important role. It was to an extent responsible for ending detention camps where villagers were kept within barbedwire enclosures. The Baptist Church had also created the Nagaland Peace Mission and it has influence in Naga politics.

The Congress government of C.S. Jamir which stayed in power until February 2003, indirectly but consistently

expressed its opposition to talks between the Government of India and the National Socialist Council of Nagalim (NSCN). After its defeat that year, the Nagaland Peoples' Front formed the government under Neiphiu Rio, which has been in power since. This Government says that it will welcome whatever agreement is arrived at between the Indian government and the NSCN, the Naga organization. Its government will resign, and will welcome a new government according to that agreement. It will not stand in the way of an agreement, as the Jamir Government had done.

The NSCN was formed a little after an accord between the Indian government and some Naga leaders (of the Zapuphizo group) was arrived at in 1975. Following that accord with Zapuphizo group, about 500 Nagas laid down their guns and deposited them at the peace camp in Chidema, near Kohima. At that time the Naga National Council and its fighters had set up camps in northern Burma (Myanmar). Then the Indian army was keenly engaged in fighting Naga armed Underground. Many of them had gone to Somra tract and Kachin area of northern Burma, after bringing arms from China. The Burmese army was also engaged in fighting them, but was unable to drive them out. The people of the Kachin Hills were also fighting the Burmese army.

Some Nagas found the Shillong Accord unaccep-table. Their leaders, Muiva and Isak Chishi Swu wrote a letter to Mr. Zapuphizo, the President of the Naga National Council in London, asking him to oppose the Shillong agreement, which looked like a surrender. For years Zapuphizo, whose brother Keviyalie was among the signatories to the agreement, did not oppose it. Thereupon, the Naga fighters camping in northern

Burma who were against the agreement, set up a separate party of their own, the National Socialist Council of Nagalim (NSCN), headed by Isak Chishi Swu and Thuingaleng Muiva, the first a senior Naga Leader and the other a former General Secretary of the Naga National Council. Both had been to China to get arms.

The group which signed the Shillong Accord began moves to annihilate the new party, the NSCN. It captured Isak and Muiva and some of their companions in northern Burma. Seventy two fighters who were with the two were killed, and graves were dug in three places for burying Isak and Muiva. But a commander guarding the two leaders relented and released them.

Thereupon, on January 31, 1980, the two with their followers set up the National Socialist Council of Nagalim, followed by the formation of their Underground Government called the Peoples' Republic of Nagalim, on March 21, 1980.

No progress was made in following the Shillong Accord of 1975. The Nagas in support of the Accord thought of bringing Mr. Zapuphizo to India for talks with Delhi on the 'remaining issues' of the Agreement. That did not happen. Talks on taking that Agreement further did not take place. Mr. Zapuphizo died meanwhile.

The NSCN became better organized and started gathering strength. It had weapons brought from China in quantity. The Tangkhul and other Nagas of Manipur with their educated men had joined the Semas to form the NSCN. Other Nagas too began coming over and the NSCN expanded.

After gathering strength, its fighters began attacking the Indian Army and those who had signed the Shillong Accord.

Two attempts were made to kill the former Underground home minister, Ramyo, one of the five who had signed the Shillong Accord. But he survived. Then he went to America, to live with his brother, a doctor there, where he died in a road accident.

These events weakened the Naga National Council of Mr. Zapuphizo, and the Isak Swu and Muiva group gathered strength. The Indian Government then established contact with the NSCN and signed a ceasefire agreement with it in 1997. Talks started between them and are still going on.

Chapter 19

With India : How and In What Form ?

Naga leaders accept the geographical togetherness of their land and India, and the fact that the two have to live next to each other. The question is how to live in harmony and peace? For that the two have to create a relationship and accept arrangements. According to National Socialist Council of Nagalim (NSCN) Nagas have a constitution of their own. It may need to be compared with the Indian constitution to find commonalities. This may not present a great difficulty. Kashmir has a constitution of its own, which has been incorporated in the Indian constitution.

The second problem is in the field of defense. The Nagas believe that the Indian army by itself may not be able to provide a comprehensive defence. Without the participation of the Naga people on this border, India may not be totally safe.

The defence of Nagalim should also be the responsibility of the Naga people. They have their homes, land, villages and their whole life there. If they don't defend these themselves who will? The Indian army has rear areas to withdraw to, if needed. The Nagas have no rear area. They thus have no alternative but

to fight to defend what they have.

The NSCN would like India to give Nagas a role in defence. That role has to be made clear in Naga-Indian talks.

More than 5,000 armed men of the NSCN are now living in camps in Nagalim. An agreement on their future role has to be arrived at.

Nagalim is next to Myanmar and close to Bangladesh. India may have matters to settle with them. That might affect Nagalim. What role will India provide to Nagalim in dealing with Myanmar next door?

The people of Nagalim have their own ways of life, regulated by their customs and traditions. This system will have to be maintained. An agreement on that will have to be made.

There may be other matters needing agreement.

The major problem is of unifying all Naga areas. Voices are being raised in India for the adjustment of state boundaries and territories, like in Andhra Pradesh for Telangana and in Maharashtra for Vidarbha. If India sets up a commission for solving these issues, the unification of Naga areas can possibly be taken up in that process. But one does not know if the NSCN will wait untill then.

The danger is that the slow progress of the talks may upset the NSCN and it may think of taking a different course other than present negotiations. There is also the danger of a new group of militants emerging to complicate the situation.

The problem of unification of Naga areas has been complicated by the common minimum programme of the ruling United Progressive Alliance government in Delhi. The parties in the ruling Alliance have agreed that they are not in favour of border or boundary changes of the present states. If all

Naga inhabited territories are put together, which is the Nagas' demand, certainly the boundaries of Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh and possibly Assam will have to be re-adjusted. The union government is not able to decide how to deal with that in view of the common minimum programme of its coalition alliance?

Manipur is strongly opposed to any change in its boundary. Arunachal is also opposed.

The Naga stand is that its unification demand is very old and has no connection with demands in other parts of India. The Nagas have fought for this continuously. It is time for them to come to an agreement with Delhi on it. It has no relationship with politics of other parts of India. It is a separate issue, for which Delhi will have to find a solution.

There are still a few people in Nagaland who talk of Naga sovereignty. But they are not the people who will fight an armed struggle in support of it. The NSCN is a well-knit organization trained in handling weapons, capable of resuming its struggle.

There is no doubt that money coming from Delhi has made a great impact on Naga life. Nagaland state has a network of roads, though all may not be in good condition. Water and electricity have reached villages. Its towns and cities are doing well. Things of daily need are available everywhere. A well-to-do class has made its appearance. Many good schools have come up and also hospitals. Daily life has improved. Why would Nagas jeopardize all these gains and revert to the old, difficult way of life?

There were two reasons for the failure of 1967-68 Delhi negotiations. One was the appointment of Brajkumar Nehru as Governor of states of the Northeast. He advised Indira Gandhi

not to take any decision on the Naga issue on her own, but leave the matter to him. He took the responsibility of dealing with the Naga problem, which he failed to understand.

The second was the antagonism between Angami and Sema Naga leaderships.

The Shillong Accord of 1975 on Nagaland had agreed:

1. The Naga underground leaders have of their own will and accord agreed to recognize the Indian Constitution unconditionally.
2. All underground arms will be brought out and deposited in selected places. On details and modalities of where and how underground elements will deposit their arms, talks will be held between the Underground forces, representatives of the Government of India, the army and the Peace Council.
3. It was decided that the representatives of the Underground organizations would be given enough time to settle other matters, on the basis of which a final agreement will be made.

   The signatories of the Underground organizations were, I. Temjenba, S. Dharu, Z. Ramyo, N. Assa and Keviyalie, and Governor L.P. Singh who signed on behalf of the Indian government. It was called the Shillong Agreement or Accord.

After the agreement, the Indian army reduced its searches, arrests, beatings and harassment, and some degree of peace was restored in Nagaland.

For further talks on the agreement, Zapuphizo, who was then in London, was to come to India. He however died in 1990.

I left Nagaland and worked as a journalist in Southeast Asia. One day I was suddenly called to Delhi by the Prime Minister, Mrs. Gandhi. She asked me to go to London to tell Mr. Zapuphizo to stop Nagas from going to China. She said she had decided that if no more Naga groups went for arms to China, say for three months, she would start talks with Mr. Zapuphizo. For three months she would watch whether the Naga traffic to and from China had ceased or not. It was possible, she said, that the Nagas would not heed Mr. Zapuphizo and keep up their traffic with China.

I explained to Mrs. Gandhi that Zapuphizo was not the man responsible for the Nagas' going to China. Its direction was in the hands of Isak and Muiva, who were opposed to Zapuphizo. Mrs. Gandhi said she was under great pressure from Nagaland government to begin talks with Zapuphizo. This pressure was from the Chief Minister of Nagaland, Mr. Vizol, and his ruling party. If the Nagas continued their traffic with China, there would be opposition to it in India and then she would not be able to hold talks with Zapuphizo. "I want to know whether the Naga people heed Zapuphizo's advice or not. If they do, I shall begin talks with him. So, just go and ask him if he will cut off Naga connection with China. If he will, only then will I take the next step of talking to him", she told me.

I went to London and conveyed to Mr. Zapuphizo what Mrs. Gandhi said. He was very anxious to talk to Mrs. Gandhi. He said, "I shall certainly put an end to the Nagas' traffic with China. Take me to Delhi with you and have me start talks with Mrs. Gandhi," he asked.

I told him, "Uncle, Indira Gandhi first wants to see for three months if you can stop Nagas from going to China. If

nobody goes there for three months, only then will she start the talks." He nevertheless said "Just take me with you! The Indian government can, if it wants, keep me as hostage in Delhi for three months to see if the Nagas do stop going to China or not. You take me along and tell Mrs. Gandhi that I will stay in Delhi for that period so that she can know for herself that I can stop Nagas from going to China!"

I said I hadn't been told to bring him to Delhi. He asked me to telephone Mrs. Gandhi to say that he was ready for a three-month captivity in Delhi to start the talks! But Delhi did not accept his proposal. It wanted to wait for three months to see if Nagas really stop going to China.

I could not take Zapuphizo to Delhi.

Meanwhile, the army brought down the Vizol government in Nagaland. It took in helicopters twelve members of the Nagaland Legislative Assembly supporting Vizol, to its cantonment in Rangapahar, making Vizol, lose his majority in the Assembly. His government fell and President's rule was imposed on Nagaland. The fall of his government brought to an end the pressure he was exerting on Mrs. Gandhi to begin talks with Zapuphizo.

Zapuphizo subsequently had talks with Morarji Desai, (after Mr. Desai became the Prime Minister) on Jun 14, 1977, in London. Morarji had gone to London to attend the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference. Both were difficult persons by nature. So they quarrelled. Zapuphizo began by saying that his people were facing great difficulties and hoped that with Mr. Desai becoming Prime Minister, life for them would become easier. Morarji lost his temper. Nagas were not in any trouble, he said, adding that he did not want to talk about Nagaland.

Zapuphizo said he had met Mahatma Gandhi in 1947. Gandhiji had told him that if the Nagas did not consider themselves Indian and did not consider Nagaland a part of India, the matter ended there. "India will not attack you. I will lay down my life for the safety of Nagas", Gandhiji had told him, he said.

Morarji: Why do you bring Mahatma Gandhi in this? I know him more than you do. I will not agree with what he said. I shall do what I think is right.

Zapuphizo: The reason for my wanting to meet the Prime Minister of India was that my people, the Nagas, were in trouble and they had to be freed.

Morarji: The Nagas are in no trouble. Nagaland seceded from Assam and became a separate state. If you want to talk about Nagaland, our talks will end right here. I know everything. I am the Prime Minister of India. There is no need to tell me that there is a problem in Nagaland.

Zapuphizo: Will the Prime Minister finish off all the Nagas?

Morarji: Yes, I shall finish off all the rebellious Nagas. No mercy will be shown on that score. We are keeping our citizens in safety there. It is only a handful of Nagas who are creating trouble, which we will not allow to go on. We shall keep our citizens safe and shall finish off all elements hostile to that task. No mercy will be shown.

Zapuphizo: I wanted to make your acquaintance. Some Nagas have come with me. They are waiting outside. May I bring them in? (He had brought along his daughter, Adino, and another Naga.)

Morarji: Yes.

Zapuphizo brought them in and said: "I said to the Prime Minister that the Nagas have been in trouble for years."

Morarji: They are in trouble because they talk of independence. All of you who live outside (India) are welcome to return, and become Indian. But if you talk about independence, I shall not hold any talks with you.

Khodao (a Naga with Mr. Zapuphizo): You have struggled and fought all your life. When you became Prime Minister we thought some agreement would be possible.

Morarji: There is nothing on which an agreement is to be made. I shall not show any mercy to rebels. I shall finish all of them. I shall not leave anything undone on that score.

Zapuphizo: Mr. Prime Minister, will there be another chance to meet you for talks?

Morarji: Talks on what? There will be no talks.

Zapuphizo's daughter had brought a tape recorder hidden in her clothes, with which she recorded what had been said. Copies of the tape were then sent to Nagaland to tell the people how unsympathetically and harshly Morarji had spoken.

After returning to India, Morarji made a statement in the Lok Sabha (Parliament) about his meeting Zapuphizo, wherein he repeated all that he had said. In Nagaland, members of Zapuphizo's Naga National Council kept up their efforts for resumption of talks with the Prime Minister.

Those going to China were with Isak— Muiva's National Socialist Council of Nagalim, and the task of fighting the Indian army had passed into the hands of this group.

The Indian Government became aware of this group's strength and importance and started sending messages to it for stopping fighting, which led to the 1997 ceasefire. The Indian

leader who pressed for a ceasefire was the late Mr. Rajesh Pilot, then India's Minister of State for Home Affairs.

It was decided that the Government of India will remove restrictions on the NSCN and will work for a political solution through talks with it. There will be no pre-conditions for the talks.

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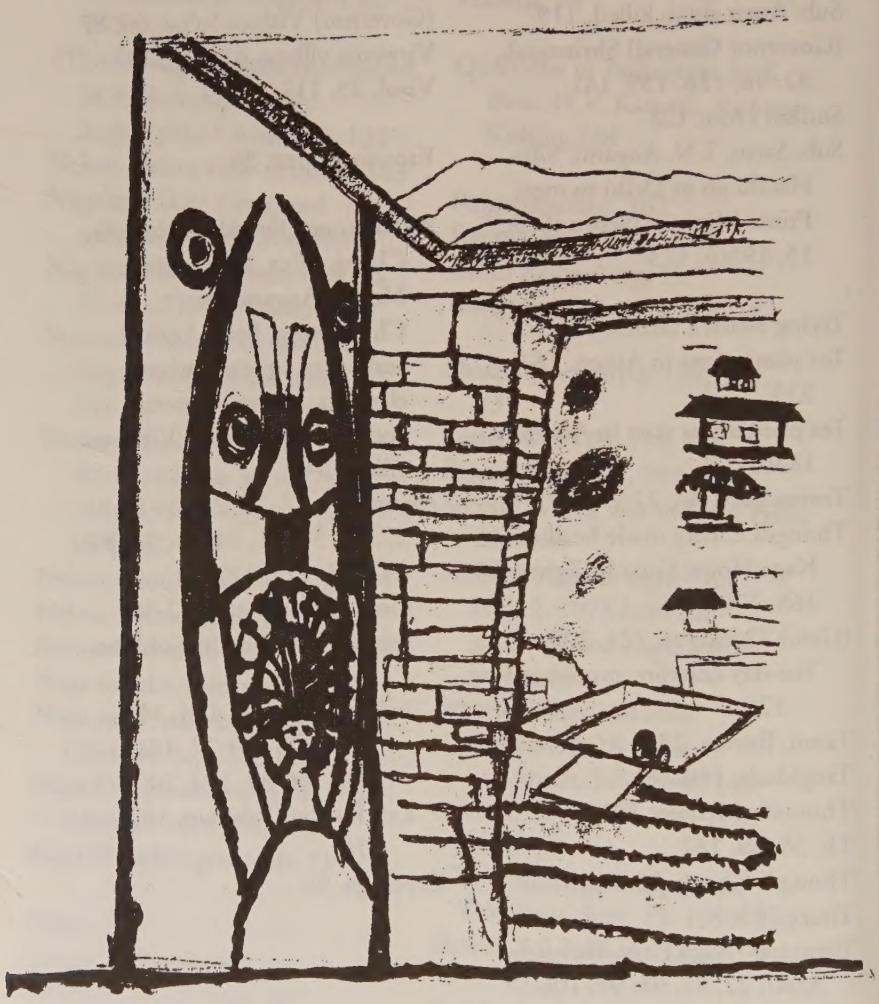

Khonoma Village Gate

HARISH CHANDOLA has been a journalist for the past 60 years with a vast experience of covering conflicts and wars in Africa and Asia.

He began his career in journalism with a series of articles written on his experiences of travels inside Tibet in 1950 and 1954. He went into Tibet from his native Garhwal on foot since there were no roads and was detained by the Chinese for three months.

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In the 1960s he was posted to Cairo from where he covered the Algerian War of Independence; and was witness to the setting up of the Organization of African Unity (OAU).

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